





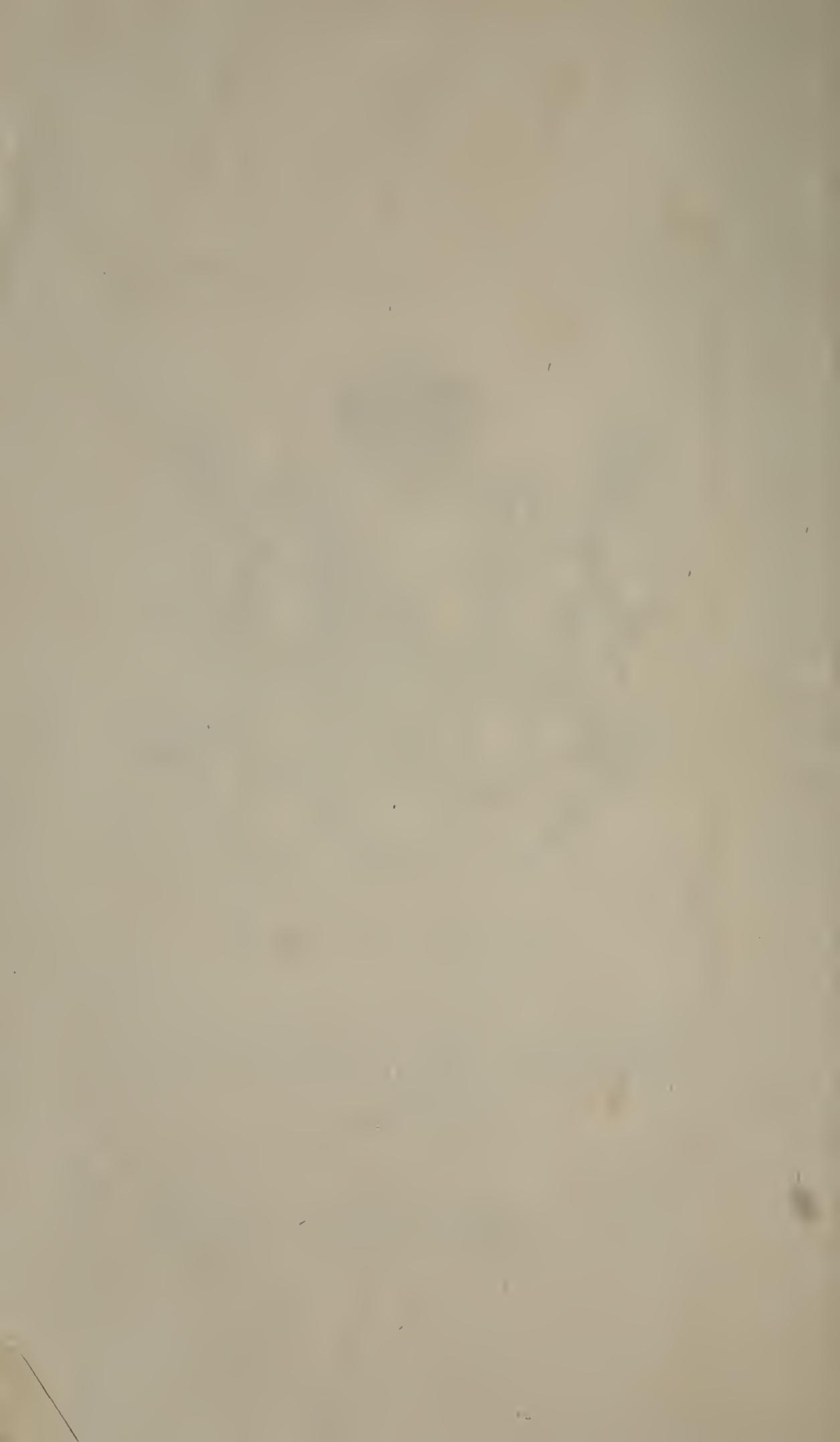
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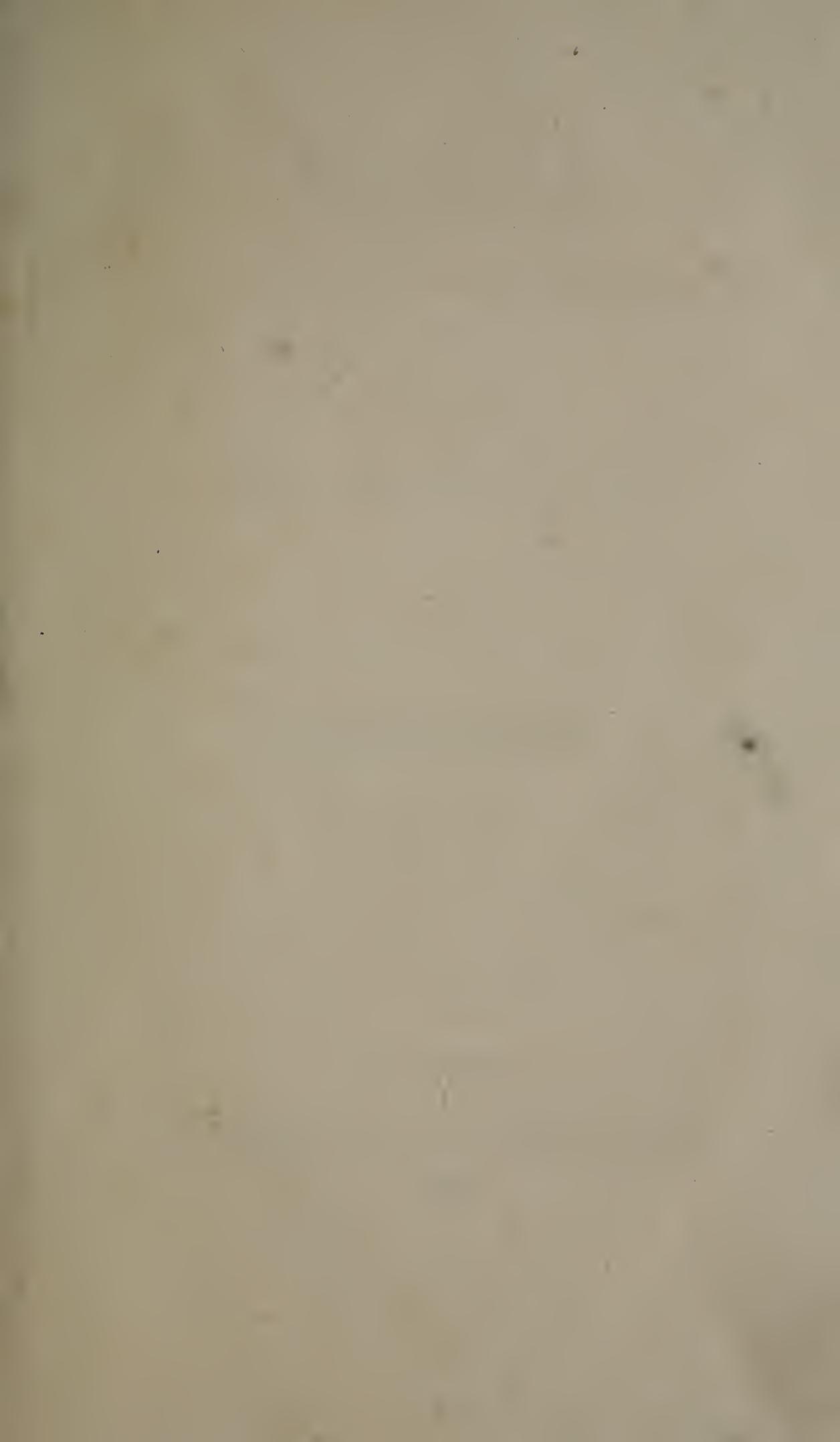
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DE LISLE;

OR,

THE SENSITIVE MAN.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:

EDWARD BULL, HOLLES STREET.

1828.

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# DE LISLE.

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## CHAPTER I.

BETWEEN persons so well disposed towards one another, conversation was not likely to languish. Many were the topics started, and the mutual acquaintance inquired after. Gradually they fell into more confidential subjects, and Sir Hubert learned that life had brought its usual share of trials to Lady James. She had married almost immediately on her return to England from Spa. Her husband was a sailor; fonder of his wife than of any thing in the world, except his profession. When he was on shore, he was wild to be employed; and when at sea, it was her turn to be restless and anxious.

She led a wandering life, moving about from

one sea-port to another, according to where he was stationed. Her own fortune was considerable, but his private property was small: however, as he was quite certain of rising in his profession, making a vast deal of prize-money, and getting half his relations to make wills in his favour, he insisted on his wife's money being all settled on younger children, and leaving the elder son to the magnificent dreams in which the father indulged.

Lord J. Saville had a very warm heart, and a very thoughtless temper: he not only gave money while he had it to give; he positively threw it away, satisfied that his children were provided for, and his wife a good manager. This good management, which he spared himself the trouble of investigating, consisted in depriving herself of every thing, that he might want for nothing. She had unfortunately a very large family, several of whom she lost in their infancy. When men are continually from home, it cannot be expected they should have a very lively interest for babies they have hardly seen. Lady James would not have said to any one that her husband did not care for the infants; but when she lost one, she shrank from writing to him how deep was her

affliction. She felt that she must mourn alone, and she *did* mourn. How often has this young woman, rich, accomplished, and titled, rocked the cradle of a suffering child, surrounded only by hired nurses, and listening to the rising wind, or breaking surge on the shore, with that terror at which many an aching heart has sickened, lest it might be a gale at sea !

The ways of Providence are mysterious :— from the dangers of war, and the constant perils of the deep, her husband returned in safety, to die on shore in the bosom of his family, and of an apparently slight disorder, which had not given a moment's anxiety to any one ! Lady James was utterly unprepared for this blow, and in the first bitter moments of grief, hating the scenes and the society which she had enjoyed with him, shrinking from the mirth and levity that seemed to mock her desolate heart, she retired to the most solitary spot she could think of, and gave up all communication with the world.

As reason resumed its empire, (for who is reasonable in the sad delirium of wretchedness ?) she endeavoured to make her seclusion useful. She paid her husband's debts, she dis-embarrassed his paternal property, and added

her savings to it, that the portion of her elder son might not be inferior to that of her other children. Hitherto she had been little disposed to regret her retirement; but years make great changes in a young family. She now wished for masters for her daughters; and meaning to remove her son to a greater school, she was desirous to be within a more moderate distance of him. Her enfeebled spirits made her reluctant to begin life anew; at the same time that she dreaded injuring her children by any delay in these plans. Leading so very monotonous a life, it was no wonder she thought the exertion of changing it most formidable.

De Lisle pitied the nervous terror with which she talked of making new acquaintances, or renewing old ones. So little was his energy in his own concerns, that he never felt either the right or the inclination to advise others in the prosecution of theirs; but this was no common case. Had Lady James been undecided, he would not have sought to influence her; but she was merely timid. Her opinion was fixed, and she wanted only courage to execute her own resolution. He was accordingly willing to assist her, and he did so by urging her to remove to

his neighbourhood, which was but a day's journey from the school to which her boy was to go, and a few miles from a large town, where masters could be procured for the girls. Lady James, who had been lost in an ocean of plans and difficulties, and looked for no assistance from the guardians to her son, one of whom was abroad, and the other nearly superannuated, felt quite relieved by the arrangements he made, which smoothed her path at once:—they parted accordingly with raised spirits; De Lisle glad that he had something to interest himself about, and his hostess thankful at having at last come to a determination that promised so well.

The remainder of his tour passed off less gaily than the former part. Lady De Lisle had caught cold, and was oppressed and feverish, and the young bride, who could not forgive the neglect with which she had been treated, or the consciousness of the ridiculous figure she had made, pouted at her leisure, Sir Hubert being as little willing, as his mother was able, to soothe her into good-humour. He stayed with Lady De Lisle and her sister only long enough to see her quite recovered, and then bent his way homeward with more than usual satisfaction. He thought with pleasure

that Solway and Jane would meet him, and it is, after all, the knowledge of *who* will receive us, that lends to *home* its charm and comfort. He pleased himself, in fancying the changes in the Parsonage.

It had long been the residence of an old man and a widower, and had little comfort to boast besides a few shelves of books and an easy chair, against the high leather back of which Hubert had often leaned as a child, to answer the questions every elderly person likes to ask a schoolboy. The Parrys had all very good taste, and their furniture, though handsome, as suited to their affluence, was never gaudy. Its form, more elegant than ostentatious, was of a piece with the manners of its possessors, and often contrasted with houses in the immediate neighbourhood, where you could not see a table on which did not seem to be written "I cost so much—respect me and my purchaser."

That Mrs. Solway would have ordered proper sofas and curtains for her mother's drawing-room, he did not doubt; but the Parsonage was quite a different thing, and he wondered whether she would make a comfortable small house of it, or a cottage with green paper and roses. He rather inclined to the latter opinion; Jane

was fond of poetry, of pastoral and arcadian descriptions ; many a lowly hut had he seen of her drawing, where flowering shrubs nearly concealed the rustic casement, and the broken steps at the door would have endangered the safety of a casual visitor. He was envious to trace her finger in all the fanciful decorations of the place, and her husband's experience in the more sober improvements.

He reached home about the middle of the day, and getting out at the lodge, crossed the Park towards the house of his friends. He looked in at the lower windows, but there was no one there : he rang the bell, and a servant-maid presented herself to inform him that Mr. and Mrs. Solway were gone to spend the day with Mrs. Parry, to meet Lady Avondale, and would not be home till late at night. Sir Hubert was disappointed. He did not like to go over their house in their absence, but inquired if many alterations had been made. He was assured no workmen had been in the house except painters, of the necessity of which he was well aware.

“ What lazy people ! ” thought he, as he turned away : “ what can they have been about all this time ? ”

Crossing the lane that separated the Parsonage from the Church, he turned off through some fields to his own farm, where he found his bailiff and family just putting by the remnant of their dinner. The various smells he encountered in consequence, of which boiled cabbage seemed the most prominent, were so far from agreeable to his fastidious senses, that he immediately proposed a visit to some young calves to escape from it.

“I suppose,” said he as they left the house, “those two fields and barn are still on my hands? I am so sure of their costing me more than they would bring me, that I would take even a lower rent than the last to get rid of them.”

“I thought,” replied the man, “your honour would be glad to hear they were let, for you have here more acres on your hands than are either profit or pleasure to you.”

“True, but who has the fields?”

“Our new parson, Sir Hubert, and did it handsomely too; no bargaining; left it to me to say what they were worth:—though your honour’s servant, I could not say more when put on my word.”

“Surely not, even if you had not been put

on your word ;—but is Mr. Solway turning farmer ?”

“No, Sir Hubert, not at all ; don't know a turnip from a potatoe, 'tis my belief ; but one of the fields is the best pasturage in the place, and he wanted it for his cows ; and then madam had a fancy for the barn to make into a school, and some other room—your honour will understand better when you see it than I can quite justly explain.”

“We will go there,” said Sir Hubert.

He did go there ; and was as much surprised at all that had been done to the barn, as he had previously been disappointed at the little that had been done to the house. There was nothing showy indeed, or ornamental, but there was so much good arrangement and substantial comfort, he could not comprehend where they had found the necessary, time, or the materials, so many of which the village did not afford. The whole range of the building on one side was occupied by machines, principally agricultural, which he found Mr. Solway let out to the farmers. There were also some rather expensive ones, for the use of carpenters and turners. A coarse deal-press at the end of the room excited Sir Hubert's curiosity. It was

opened, and found stored with common books on farming, gardening, and mechanics, interspersed with a few, a very few, religious tracts:—the sum for subscription, though trifling, was rigidly exacted, and many minor arrangements, unexplained, were guessed by De Lisle, as he glanced his eye over the book which contained the names, ages, and dwellings of the subscribers.

The school-room was like many others he had visited upon the Lancasterian plan; and the number of benches was so small, that a stranger would have augured but ill of the ambition of the neighbouring poor in scholastic acquirements. But Sir Hubert saw only that there was a beginning made, where he had so often been assured the thing was impossible. A Sunday-school, indeed, had always existed, but without, to all appearance, improving the morals of the lower orders—at least so Lady De Lisle thought, and it had been encouraged more as a thing of course by her son, than with much confidence in its utility. He had once had the plan drawn of a handsome building for a day-school, or straw-manufactory, to employ young children only; he had fixed on the spot where it was to be built; but his agent assured

him he would only throw away his money—that the farmers would thwart him, because they fancied they would be left without hedgers and ditchers if all the parish became learned; nay, the poor themselves showed the greatest disinclination to have the children taken from them just when they would be useful at home.

De Lisle had carried the point of having a new poor-house built, with improved regulations for the comfort and employment of its inmates: he had even had an impassable lane mended, much to the annoyance of many, who, rather than bear their share of the work, would have consented to see their own carts and those of their neighbours overturned every week. But he could not undertake to educate and amuse his neighbourhood in spite of themselves; and somewhat pettishly the whole thing had been given up.

As he quitted the barn he met a labourer, who was the oracle of the village and a great oddity. He asked him what he thought of the new establishment? whether it would answer?

“ Mayhap it may — mayhap it mayn’t,” answered the man with cautious philosophy.

“ But I suppose people expect it will, in

general, or Mr. Solway would not have undertaken it?"

"Could not say for the matter of that. New brooms sweep clean. And then our young parson keeps his own secret. No one knew what he was doing here till it was all done; and then, as any person wanted a thing, he mentioned that he had it; but as he gives nothing to any one in particular, whoever borrows or hires must take care of it, or he would never get it again."

"But the school?" said De Lisle somewhat impatiently.

"Oh, the school's but a puny thing, that will never thrive. I reckon Mr. Solway his-sel' thinks little of *that*, for 'tis all madam's doing. Your honour has no lady, more's the pity! or we might have had another-guess thing before now."

"It would be worth while," thought De Lisle, smiling inwardly, "to marry for the sole purpose of establishing a village school; especially here, where they are all so desirous of instruction!"

The evening was beginning to close in, and, as he entered his own house, he turned naturally to the library, which was the room he

most frequently inhabited. He did so rather from laziness than preference, for the apartment that had been peculiarly his in his father's time was the one he preferred. It had the pleasantest aspect, the most cheerful view, and was besides endeared to him from habit—that potent spell to all, but more especially to the indolent. There were many things, however, of paramount convenience in the library, too large to be transported to a smaller apartment. He had ordered a new carpet and curtains for his former favourite, and announced his resolution, if he had courage to arrange it, to establish himself there again.

The Parrys, the only family with whom he was on very intimate terms, not unfrequently amused at his laziness, declared that some supernatural influence confined him to his library, that there he had pitched his tent, and out of it no mortal power would drive him. Without reverting at the moment to any of the numerous observations made to him on this subject, he turned mechanically to the room he generally sat in, and thought it more than usually dark and dismal. He rang the bell for lights, and though it was not cold weather, ordered a fire to take off the gloom and size of the apartment.

His butler told him he would find both in the blue room, as his was called.

He was rather provoked at the apparent caprice of his servant's thus establishing him where he had no intention of being, and where he was persuaded every thing would be in disorder. Not being a man of many words, he contented himself, however, with a fretful pshaw! and followed the butler to a room which looked as if the fairies had had the arrangement of it in his absence. The carpet and curtains had arrived, and were both substantial and handsome; the original arm-chairs were looking young again with new covers; and the furniture that had always been there, well and conveniently placed: in addition, a very handsome lamp, that cast its powerful light into every corner and recess of the apartment, was suspended from the ceiling, exactly over a large table for writing, with drawers for papers. Upon it was a bronze ink-stand with every thing complete, to the sticks of sealing-wax and small taper.

The light elegant furniture that makes the charm of a woman's boudoir is worse than useless in the apartment of a single man: there were no bookcases of ornamental wood for show as much as use; no *déjeûnés* of French china.

If a table is fragile, where is the man that will not sit down upon it?—if unsteady, is he not sure to overturn it? No such accidents were to be feared in Sir Hubert's room, where every thing was solid, without being too large for its situation. What he admired the most was a French clock, on which were some beautiful alabaster figures. He went near to examine it. It was a cave: at the entrance sat a Pythoness, whose sharp witch-face was in admirable contrast with the smooth dimpled features of a child who stood near her. A young man in the attire of a peasant, his hat held humbly in his hand, seemed to have approached the oracle with considerable awe, to put the oft renewed question, of where was happiness to be found? The reply was an evident compliment to Sir Hubert, "In conferring happiness on others." This clock was the gift of Mr. Solway, as the ticket upon it of "Jane" announced. The name of Augusta was affixed to the lamp, General Parry's to the table, his wife's to the inkstand, and several smaller things were the offerings of Mrs. Seymour's children. He read the names with that pleasure with which we enter into the details of friendship; and having looked round, enjoying the air of comfort that was every

where so conspicuous, and which he fancied his disgraced room would never again boast, the thought struck him, that it was singular all the Parrys should have remembered him, but the one who had once been so much the most beloved.

Ellen alone had given nothing! She was sadly changed, and had not even one word of friendship to bestow. He sighed involuntarily, not that he loved her any longer, but that he *had* loved her, and was forgotten!

The butler roused him from the reverie into which he was falling, by encomiums on the lamp, which was on a new construction, and appeared to him by far the most sensible present.

“Every thing, indeed, is very pretty and useful, and well arranged,” said De Lisle, somewhat absently.

“Ay, Sir Hubert; Mrs. Parry arranged it all herself, and it would all be very elegant, but for that great littering tub. Sweep the new carpet as often as you will, you’ll always find leaves upon it.”

De Lisle had not before observed this present: it was a very large and very handsome fuschsia. Pinned to the outside was a piece of paper, which looked like part of a letter; he

unfastened it, and found in Lady Avondale's writing :—

“ You ask me, my dear Jane, if I will contribute to your present occupation of dressing up the private apartment of your kind friend and neighbour? Very gladly, though in a way you will think shabby; but why should I give costly things to Sir Hubert De Lisle? Money is nothing to him: affection only, which cannot be purchased, can have any value in his eyes. Send him, then, the beautiful fuschsia he sent me so many years ago. In its increased size and strength he will read the time that has elapsed since the gift; in its vigour and beauty, the care that has for so many years been taken of it for the sake of the donor. One change, indeed, has taken place, but it is one for which our fate, our wayward fate, is more to blame than either of us. When he gave it me, he loved me better than I dared to love him; and now that I return it, I love him better than he chooses to love me.”

De Lisle continued to ponder over this scrap of Mrs. Solway's letter long after the servant had left the room. The concluding words, he

was aware, were more fully comprehensible to him, than they could possibly be to Jane ; and in the sort of inadvertence that prompted Mrs. Solway to leave them for his perusal, he saw at once that the idea of Ellen having been more to him than the playfellow of his childhood and intimate acquaintance of his youth, had never once presented itself to her mind.

He had often before been struck with that singular propensity in the human heart, that leads us at times to make use of expressions to our friends, both in speaking and writing, which they cannot from circumstances comprehend in their real and literal signification : that playing, as it were, on thoughts to which we alone have the key, and then, if by chance they excite attention, hastening to explain them away and give the whole a careless general air. He had done this often himself ; but it was unlike Ellen, whose self-possession so rarely deserted her. Nothing yielded more food for rumination in this extract, than the line with which she had marked the words “ wayward fate.” Was it merely as a quotation ? or did she mean to imply that she lamented her fate, and would rather have had it linked to his ? Yet, if so, why did she refuse him ? Why did she not

*dare* to love him? He could only account for it by supposing her to have been engaged previously to Lord Avondale, and, though deserted, unable to detach herself from him. Such weakness was, indeed, unlike her ;—where, in such a case, was her delicacy, her dignity, her high sense of principle? It seemed hardly answer enough to say of such a woman, she was blinded and misled by love; and yet that was a more pardonable excuse than mere ambition and worldly-mindedness. “Well,” thought he at last, making an effort to cast behind him the train of thought into which he had fallen; “what matters it now? Let her be right or wrong, it avails nothing to me—the charm is broken, and I have done with all such illusions.”

## CHAPTER II.

THE following day De Lisle saw the Solways and their house. It was neat and clean, and not uncomfortable; but there was little taste, and less magnificence, in Jane's arrangements. She had wisely begun with the useful, and proposed adding the ornamental, as they had the money to spare. Sir Hubert had never thought of this obstacle, and could not understand their being without a harp, or even a piano-forte. When he expressed his wonder, Jane answered with simplicity, "It was surely not a matter of absolute necessity—that she had much to occupy her at the first. When once she had become acquainted with her husband's parishioners, overcome the difficulties that new servants throw in the way, and set every thing into a proper course, it would be time enough to think of accomplishments.

“ I fear,” said De Lisle, “ this is but a prelude to giving them up altogether.”

“ As I am myself really fond of music,” answered Jane with a smile, “ it is not probable ; and as Mr. Solway also likes it, I may say it is not possible. He will probably give up a portion of his reading for my comfort, or at least occasionally vary it to lighter subjects, more suited to my comprehension, so that it would be very ungrateful in me if I forgot the accomplishments in which he takes pleasure.”

“ Now that,” interrupted Sir Hubert, “ is a regularly ungenerous matrimonial speech ! Very obliging of you to amuse your husband if he will amuse you, and to expect sacrifices most confidently from him without any intention of making any in return !”

“ You are saucy,” replied Jane, “ but not accurate. A duty does not cease to be a duty because it is also a pleasure, though in that case I won't pretend to assert that it is very meritorious. The truth is, a meritorious action is a mighty hard thing to achieve with the best possible intentions ; for it has pleased Providence to make most of our duties not merely easy but agreeable. The enlargement of our

duties,—what is it but the enlargement of our affections, and the extension of our sphere of usefulness—consequently, the increase of our happiness?”

De Lisle was on the point of congratulating Solway on having met with a wife who could write his sermon for him on occasion, when he was stopped by remarking the expression of his countenance. He had taken no part in the conversation, having been busy sealing and directing a parcel of letters; but the increased animation of Jane's tone had attracted his attention, and he turned round to gaze upon her with that sort of quiet, but earnest, admiration and tenderness, that can be felt only by those to whom love is as much the result of principle as inclination, and is therefore sacred.

Sir Hubert's *tact* showed him at once that the most innocent pleasantry would have been grating to the feelings of his friend at such a moment, and he was instantly serious, though certainly not sad. De Lisle, mistrustful of himself and others, rarely ventured to give way to any deep feeling. He was never fearful of doing so when with Solway, whose heart was a mine of inexhaustible and unconcealed affections, while his calm self-possession convinced

his patron that it is both nobler and safer to regulate than to extinguish.

He took the first opportunity of Mrs. Solway's being out of her house to put up in her drawing-room a piano-forte, which his mother used to have in her dressing-room. The Solways knew he had another, and that he had in fact no use for that one. They agreed, therefore, to borrow it till their own was purchased, and by degrees, music, songs, and a harp found their way to the Parsonage upon the same footing. It was true De Lisle profited by this as much as they did; scarcely an evening passed in which he did not join them, and often left them convinced that the clocks at the Parsonage went faster than anywhere else.

It became at last impossible for him to have any one to his own house, unless the Solways could meet them. If his visitors were highly gifted, he knew it would be a treat to the rector; if they were dull, with the assistance of his friends, the evening would still be bearable. The illnatured part of the neighbourhood (alas! there is always an illnatured part to every neighbourhood) began to grumble. "Mrs. Solway was a vast favourite! Mrs. Solway might command every thing at Sir Hubert's! Mrs. Sol-

way's recommendations of poor were always attended to!" Often as these observations were made, they produced but little effect: the lady was so invariably obliging in small things, and her husband so essentially benevolent in great ones, that the predominant feeling was respect and regard for both.

Still many equitable persons lamented an intimacy that seemed to shut out all hope of the Baronet's marrying. He had found a sort of domestic comfort at the Parsonage, without any tie to bind and fret him. He had always at hand a pleasing well-bred woman to assist him in some degree to do the honours of his own house; he looked happier than he had ever done; consequently, he was not likely to change his situation. To make a little diversion to the distress and disappointment of these worthy matrons, Lady James Saville and her family arrived at the house which De Lisle had taken for them. He was so afraid she would cling to her old habits of seclusion, though established in a gayer place, that he determined to break the ice at once.

He gave dinners and balls, and introduced her to the whole neighbourhood, and pointed out to her the persons who would be least

objectionable as companions to her daughters. The whole country rang with their arrival and the attention paid them by Sir Hubert. People were now bent on marrying him; but whom would he choose? Gertrude, Anne, or their mother? Some hinted Lady James was too old; others maintained the girls were too young. One of them, however, he *must* take, and as he seemed in no hurry to decide for himself, the report arose that he wished to direct, in person, the education of his future wife, and that Lady James had removed into his immediate neighbourhood, that it might be finished under his own eye. His anxiety about masters, and the questions he asked them respecting the progress of their pupils, confirmed this idea; but the good gossips still remained in torturing ignorance as to which of the two sisters was Lady De Lisle elect.

Sir Hubert never had one at his house without the other; he spoke equally to them, he called them both by their Christian names; he pelted them with sweetmeats, delighted to shock the gravity of Gertrude, and excite the vivacity of Anne. The sagacity of the neighbourhood was at fault; nor did any one but the Solways perceive that nothing could well be discovered where

there was nothing to discover. They, indeed, hoped that in time it might be otherwise, and that when the Misses Saville ceased to be children, their beauty might have its effect on De Lisle. Jane wished him to choose the sage and serene Gertrude, while Solway's vote was for her gayer sister, whose mirth was never levity, and whose enjoyments were never selfish.

Lady James Saville, brought into the country by Sir Hubert, naturally became intimate with his particular friends, and had no reason to repent having trusted to his judgment. "We will ask Sir Hubert,—we will inquire what Sir Hubert does," were phrases her family heard so often from her, that he was naturally quite an oracle with them. Whenever he called, dogs fawned upon him, children clung to him, and everybody consulted him about something; he could not avoid feeling an interest in those who felt so much for him, and his time was nearly divided between the Savilles and the Solways.

Benevolence increases in proportion as it is exerted, and De Lisle at this period of his life began to grow very patient with wearisome people, and by that very indulgence they became

less so. Having tried for some time the luxury of giving pleasure to those he loved, he acquired the pleasing habit of doing it for its own sake; and every face now brightened up, at his approach, with the remembrance of some kindness he had shown, or with the hope of some he would yet show. He was not fully aware that it was this moral improvement that was the secret of his improvement in happiness: he rather reversed it, and believed he was better because he was happier; and that he was happier, he was convinced, he owed to the influence of Solway. Jane was not very eager to controvert this idea, though she sometimes hinted that to lean on the hand of a mortal is insecure; still, she had no difficulty in believing that the presence of her husband spread a charm around, in whose pure atmosphere all unholy things withered and died. Happy herself, she thought a state of happiness was the most natural. All affliction she attributed to mistake or accident—mistake in setting our affections on unsatisfying things, or accident in being rashly betrayed into a line of life at variance with nature and reason. When De Lisle sometimes on relating some tale of woe would finish it in the words of Petrarch,

“ Ahi ! null' altro che pianto al mondo dura ;”\*

she would answer, “ I am happy, why should not others be so also ?”

It is true, that if her eye wandered to her husband, as she made the assertion, the thought that he might be taken from her would sometimes arise to chill her confidence in the durability of her happiness. She would then bow her head with hurried resignation to the possible trial, and turn hastily from a future, where we do not voluntarily place phantoms to affright us.

One day that Sir Hubert was calling for his letters on horseback, as he sometimes did, on putting those for the Solways into his pocket, his eye caught the handwriting of Lady Avondale. Jane had been wondering at her sister's silence ; and willing to give her the letter, therefore, as soon as possible, De Lisle, instead of sending it by a servant, called himself at the parsonage, and, tying his horse to the gate, entered the drawing-room unannounced. He found Mrs. Solway looking half-asleep, very weary of holding her baby, who was not above two months old, in a fixed position, in order not to break its slumbers.

\* “ There is in this world nothing eternal but tears.”

“ I am so glad you are come !” said she ; “ do ring the bell for nurse, that I may get rid of this indefatigable sleeper.”

De Lisle obeyed, and presented her with the letter.

“ My hands are full,” said she, looking eagerly at the letter ; “ will you just break the seal, and tell me that Ellen is not ill ?”

The seal was broken, but Sir Hubert seemed in no hurry to read.

“ You are very slow,” said Jane impatiently. “ Good Heavens ! there is bad news ?”

“ Not of Ellen ; —it is Lord Avondale who is ill, dangerously ill,” and he read her the letter.

“ And my sister is alone ; even her stepsons are absent. If he dies, she will be worn out with watching, and no one near her. How I wish it were possible for me to go to her ! will you seek Mr. Solway, and tell him I long to go ?” and before she had finished her phrase, De Lisle had left the room in search of her husband.

Mr. Solway was much annoyed. He was unable to accompany his wife, the following day being Sunday ; nor did he like her to go alone, especially with an unweaned baby. But Sir Hubert had determined at once, in case his

friend feared the journey for Mrs. Solway less than the anxiety she would endure by staying at home, to accompany her himself. He was not, indeed, tempted to establish himself beside the nurse and infant, in the inside of the carriage, but he took possession of the box, drove his own horses into the neighbouring town, where, taking four posters, their light chariot proceeded with a speed almost equal to Jane's wishes, and reached Lord Avondale's just as the sun was rising to welcome them. Cautiously and quietly they demanded admittance, and were told by some sleepy servants that there was no hope of their lord, and that their lady was sitting up in his apartment, as she had already done for several nights.

De Lisle, having gained this information, took his leave of Mrs. Solway, meaning to attempt sleeping for a few hours at the village inn. When he reached it, however, he changed his mind, and thought when he had got some food, it would revive him more to take a walk. The morning was fresh but beautiful, and the part of the country quite unknown to him. It was his intention, after giving his servant a few hours' rest, to return home directly. When, therefore, he had indulged his wandering fancy,

he turned into a plantation that formed part of the Avondale pleasure-ground, wishing to ask if any change had taken place in the invalid.

This shrubbery was intersected by a narrow lane, and as he laid his hand on the small green gate that terminated it, meaning to pass through a corresponding one on the opposite side, his attention was attracted by a figure flying across the lawn, in the direction in which he stood. At first, he had been struck with its velocity only; but as it approached, he thought so sylph-like a form had never crossed the imagination of a poet or a painter. It was a young girl, whose fair hair, upborne by the breeze, seemed to float back like waving gold. Her slight and graceful figure, robed in white, darted past him like a vision: he almost doubted if he had really seen any thing, when he heard voices in the lane. He leaned over the little gate, and perceived the person whose appearance had excited his wonder, speaking to a servant in livery. She took some parcel from him, and giving him a note, desired it might be taken to the inn, for the gentleman who came with Mrs. Solway; then, turning back, she resumed her race with all her former swiftness.

When De Lisle could see her no longer, he

proceeded leisurely to the house, called afterwards on the village Doctor, who had been allowed to leave his noble patient in consequence of the arrival of a physician, and, finding the worst fears confirmed by every one, was relieved to think Mrs. Solway had arrived at a moment when Lady Avondale so much required assistance and affection. He got home soon after dark, and sent Jane's note to her husband immediately. The next news was, as they expected, the death of Lord Avondale, and also the return home of one of his sons, and the arrival of Captain Seymour. Mr. Solway, therefore, gave up all idea of leaving home, except to bring his wife back as soon as Lady Avondale could spare her. Some time after, when General and Mrs. Parry were expressing a wish to go to Ellen, De Lisle observed, she was probably not in need of more persons for the present, as, besides her youngest sister, he believed she had a young lady staying with her.

“Yes,” replied General Parry, “she has, I know, Lady Rosamond Trevannon; but *she* cannot yet be grown out of girl's frocks.”

“You forget how time passes,” observed his wife. “Lady Rosamond has been out some time, though she was absent the last visit

we paid to Lady Avondale : you remember her but as a child."

"And who is Lady Rosamond?" said Sir Hubert; "and by what chance have I never heard her name till this hour?"

"The first question is more easily answered than the second. She is the daughter of Lord Merrion and his first wife Rosamond Churchill, who was an heiress and a great friend of Ellen's. Lady Merrion died of a broken heart, as some say, and left her child to the care of her friend. Lord Merrion, aware that he had treated his wife harshly, was glad to compromise with his conscience by yielding to her last request, and the infant, nearly two years old, was sent to Ellen, who was still with her aunt, Lady Susan. She has passed through many hands, though Ellen has always watched over her welfare, and latterly, indeed, had her under her own roof."

"Yes," interrupted the General, "and a sensible piece of business that has been! I always hated adoptions. People have enough to do with children of their own; there is no good in their looking after other people's too."

"Lady Avondale," resumed Mrs. Parry mildly, "has no children of her own, and her

attention could not be so much taken up with her stepsons, who were rarely at home, but that she had plenty of time to give to the orphan daughter of her friend. Had it not been for Lord Avondale's obstinate whim of uniting his eldest son Evelyn to Lady Rosamond, she would rather have proved a comfort to Ellen than the reverse."

"I only know what she *has* proved,—a little cold, proud puss! I cannot pretend to say what she might have been, if my poor son-in-law had not coveted her thousands for his boy—which was no unnatural desire, after all."

"It might have been natural for him to want them, but it was surely not necessary for her to give them. Lady Rosamond is young and lovely, and it would have been a pity to have married her in her cradle to a reluctant lover."

"Women always take each others' parts; but it provokes me to think how Ellen has been worried with those two silly children, who, if they had been positively forbidden to fall in love with one another, would have had no peace till they had effected it."

"Surely, General," said De Lisle laughing, "you are growing rather despotic, to insist on

people falling in love whether they will or not. If the fair ethereal-looking creature that sailed past me on gossamer wings be Lady Rosamond Trevannon, I certainly think she has some right to be difficult, though the young man's not caring for her is a little wonderful."

"Now Hubert," cried the old General with affected petulance, "don't make me furious by siding against me. If you did but know how weary I am of Lady Rosamond's beauty, and Lady Rosamond's grace, and Lady Rosamond's accomplishments, and all her manifold perfections, you would spare me your praises."

"So, then, you really don't like her? What has she done to you?"

"Nothing, nothing—she is incapable of doing any thing but what she is taught, saying any thing but what she learns by heart, or thinking any thing that has not been reduced to a mechanical process. At an age when children are so delightful, so frank and jovial, Lady Rosamond was not many degrees removed from an automaton. Her small delicate features, so fair and still, made her look like a waxen figure. You might have fancied her dumb, but that sometimes by chance she said yes or no—and deaf, but that if you addressed herself, she would start or bow :

one of the boys usually saved her the trouble of giving any other sign of life."

"Poor thing!" said Mrs. Parry, "it did grieve me to see her—a shy child, who is always bandied about among strangers, is a most unhappy little object; but she has outgrown all that now, and though she will probably inherit her mother's cold manners, it will be well for her if she has not her powerful feelings to contend with also."

"Never fear; she is a person that makes shift to live from one moment to another, because she has no complaint to kill her, and that her existence is a thing independent of herself, about which she is not consulted, and which she could only prevent by more violent measures than have ever presented themselves to her mind."

"But," interrupted De Lisle, smiling at the unusual prejudice of his benevolent old friend, "was there no energy, no volition in refusing a marriage wished for by Lord and Lady Avondale?"

"Not a whit; she said nothing on the occasion, she did nothing; and when Evelyn hinted he had rather not, she smiled and agreed with him! They have always been excellent friends."

“ Better they should remain so, than marry and become foes.”

“ Yes, if the alternative were necessary ; but it was not. If her chill temper had not frozen Cupid at once, Evelyn could not have helped loving her, and she would have taken him from laziness, and for want of any good reason for refusing him, and they would have been very comfortable, and quite as happy as their neighbours—happier than very many romantic ones, who begin with a vast provision of love, and use it all up at once.”

Mrs. Parry made some insignificant reply that turned the conversation into another channel ; and De Lisle, who, without advocating love-matches, thought the chances of happiness even fewer in what are usually called prudent ones, felt little disposed to agree with the General, though not sufficiently interested in the matter to oppose him. Shortly after, he took his leave.

## CHAPTER III.

WHEN Mrs. Solway returned, Sir Hubert inquired eagerly after Lady Avondale, and carelessly about Lady Rosamond. Jane hoped her sister was recovering, and that change of air might remove the languor that still hung upon her. She answered slightly of Lady Rosamond, that she had good health, had suffered little from fatigue, and less from anxiety. Death was always mournful, and the young lady had certainly not fixed upon it as a topic of rejoicing; but she had never liked Lord Avondale, and did not affect to lament him. "General Parry is right," thought De Lisle; "she must have a cold heart, or no heart at all, which comes to the same thing." With this reflection he dismissed her from his mind, and nothing occurred to alter his usual habits, till Lady Avondale, having changed her mourning,

announced her intention of visiting her father with her two stepsons and her ward.

Sir Hubert might have expected this visit, but he had never thought about it, and he was sorry they were coming. Of late years he had seen little or nothing of Lady Avondale, and that only in public. She was in one sense more to him than another person ; and yet, in another, less than a stranger. Seeing her once more familiarly, he should hardly know what to say to her. So intimate with all her family, so long known to herself, he would be ashamed of speaking formally to her, and yet how they were to set about being friends again he did not very well know. "It will probably be a long visit," thought he ; "I will be back for the end of it ; but I may fairly escape the beginning. I have visits to pay, and I will pay them." He kept to his resolution ; but his visits tired him, and he shortened them a little more and more at each place than he had intended at first. He thought he wanted to be home, and he would not allow to himself that Ellen was at the bottom of his restlessness. His last visit was to the Seymours'. It was in his way home. He found Augusta feeble and languid as usual. She received him affectionately,

and tried to do so cheerfully, but it was evidently an exertion.

“ Good deeds,” said she, “ should be rewarded, and yours are nearer being rewarded than you suppose. You come charitably to cheer an invalid, and you do not know that I have a treasure under my roof that I expect to have all the country gather together to obtain one glance of. I propose showing her at so much a head.”

“ It is a lady, then, I suppose ?”

“ Ay, and a beautiful lady, too—all frost and snow—but there is no saying what you may do towards melting her: at any rate, it will be something for you to flirt with, instead of going to sleep over the fire and fancying you are talking to me.”

“ You forget, my dear Augusta, you were my mistress in that noble art, and since you have ceased to give lessons I have gone back sadly.”

“ Well, rub it all up now ; it is worth while, I assure you.”

A gentle tap at the window attracted their attention. Mrs. Seymour went to open it. A young girl stood at it with a huge pointer puppy

in her arms. "Do come and look at this beautiful creature ! see how he is grown !"

"Very much, indeed," said Augusta, "and he is of a very fine sort ; but I am not very fond of puppies, especially out of kennels."

"Indeed he is quite clean ; just stroke his honest face and his lovely satin ears."

"I am a little afraid of accompaniments," said Mrs. Seymour, shrinking back, and adding hastily, "Do, my dear Lady Rosamond, look at your hand ;—you have been bit by a flea already."

"Oh ! no, 'tis the scratch of the kitten ; but my beauty and I will depart, since you don't know how to appreciate us ;" and making a motion, as if she would fling the dog into Mrs. Seymour's arms, she ran laughing away."

She had not perceived any one in the drawing-room, and Sir Hubert, though instantly struck with her appearance, did not recognise in the picturesque-looking girl before him, whose rustic bonnet shaded her face, while her long cloak concealed her figure, the more radiant vision he had perceived for a moment at Avondale Priory. Her name, her manner of running, and her bright gold locks, did not

long allow of his remaining in the dark ; and to his question of how Lady Avondale could spare her ? Mrs. Seymour replied that Lady Rosamond herself proposed it.

“ I was very glad of it,” pursued Augusta ; “ for she is good-humoured and independent ; so that she can amuse herself of a morning, and, being very musical, amuses me of an evening. Ellen’s visit at home will be long, and my husband can take Lady Rosamond there himself in a week or ten days.”

There was no one else staying in the house, and Sir Hubert had little to do during dinner but to admire Lady Rosamond, opposite whom he was placed : and he did admire her excessively the first hour ; but once accustomed to her face he naturally tired of it, for no sculptured marble could be finer, colder, or more immovable. Captain Seymour, who had been much amused at his attentive examination of the fair object before him, said in an undertone, as he helped him to some wine, “ What ! drinking deep, De Lisle ?”

He glanced, as he spoke, at their guest, who was at that moment stooping to pick up her glove.

Sir Hubert, satisfied she was not observing

them, answered with a smile, "No; recovering, on the contrary."

Lady Rosamond, who was neither deaf nor blind, smiled inwardly; but the smile did not rise to her lips, and was accordingly undetected. In the evening, Mrs. Seymour, fatigued with having talked more than usual, threw herself on her sofa, making a sign to have the light removed from before her eyes; and Lady Rosamond, closing the piano-forte, motioned to Captain Seymour to bring the chess-table. Sir Hubert took up a book to look as if he had some employment; but not being in a reading humour, his eyes wandered to the chess party. He was rather fond of the game, but at this moment it was the players that engrossed his attention. Captain Seymour, though in the prime of life, was not a *very* young man; his profession, and the various climates to which it had exposed him, had given him rather a weather-beaten complexion, and his strongly marked though handsome features required the continual play of his open, good-humoured countenance not to look coarse. His dark hair and darker eyebrows, contracted at present by earnestness in his game, the continual working of the muscles, and the strong light

and shade that fell upon his face from the position in which he sat, altogether made a most striking picture; nor could a painter have desired a more beautiful contrast to the stormy intelligence of his countenance, than by chance presented itself in the soft, fresh, and very youthful features of his antagonist. The extreme delicacy and excessive fairness of her face, the airy grace of her figure, and the calm attention she bestowed on her game, which seemed to occupy without interesting her, marked her at once for a being so exactly the reverse of the person with whom she was playing, that one almost wondered they could for a moment have the same pursuit.

Sir Hubert had quickly sketched Seymour, and the table, and the position of the players; but the highly polished and almost shadeless features of Lady Rosamond baffled his skill. He could give, indeed, the perfectly straight line of her nose; the outline of her mouth, which even in speaking preserved its placid cold expression; the large sleepy eye, so concealed beneath its heavy lid and double fringe, that its colour was nearly indeterminate: but when he had done all this, it was little better than a formal caricature of a beautiful woman. He was

so ill-pleased with his success, that he was just on the point of crushing the paper in his hand and throwing it into the fire, when Augusta, who had risen gently from her couch on detecting his employment, seized upon it in time to satisfy her own curiosity. Her exclamation attracted her husband's attention, who had just finished his game, and many comments were made by both; while Lady Rosamond continued deliberately to put by the chess-men without appearing to hear or see what so much occupied the others. Captain Seymour at last held the paper towards her, and begged she would admire herself; while De Lisle, in a tone of apology, seemed to be almost deprecating her wrath. She glanced carelessly towards it, and instantly, somewhat earnestly, said,

“You are really an artist, Sir Hubert. There are some touches there I envy you.”

“Oh, De Lisle can draw as well again,” cried Seymour; “one of these days you shall see some beautiful things — that's but a scratch.”

“It's a scratch I should have been glad to have done,” resumed Lady Rosamond—“and it was an admirable subject too,” she added, with simplicity; “for the eagerness of Captain

Seymour, and my colder spirit of calculation, quite tell a story."

"You are so taken up with the drawing, you forget to be affronted at the bad likeness of yourself," said Augusta.

"I suppose," said Lady Rosamond, with a faint smile, "Sir Hubert drew me as he saw me," and she returned him the drawing as she spoke; and for the first time she looked at him, when meeting his eyes fixed upon her, her's drooped, and the light was intercepted by its accustomed veil. Nothing was so remarkable in Lady Rosamond's face as the complete change produced in her countenance when by chance she looked up. It occurred very seldom, indeed; but no one who had once encountered her eye, thought it tedious to watch for another look. The unexpected illumination so surprised De Lisle, he could not help hastily observing,

"If Lady Rosamond had deigned before to look at me, I should have been inspired to somewhat more purpose."

The compliment did not produce a second look—not even a blush; and it might, indeed, have been doubtful, from the Lady's countenance, whether she had heard it. Sir Hubert

was provoked with himself at having felt the smallest emotion, since it was plain she was a person on whom none could be produced. The most sensible men have no patience with women who are in no way acted upon by their presence: it is in vain that they know they produce the most excitement on the giddiest and the vainest heads; they do not the less take it as a tacit homage to their superiority—nay more, they hardly ever discover when it is affected to flatter and attract them.

Lady Rosamond Trevannon had one insuperable bar to general success with men—she had no coquetry. She had not reflected about it; but she possessed an indistinct consciousness that, in her situation, popularity, or rather admiration, was not necessary. Her rank, her fortune, her beauty, were advantages with which she was born, and which ensured her as much public attention, and more than was necessary to her comfort. Willing to be liked, desirous to be esteemed, she was uncomfortable at being raved about. She dreaded every species of enthusiasm as if she had feared to have been called upon to return it. Her affections had been chilled in early youth; and while she thought her insensibility a defect of organiza-

tion, it gave her a feeling of repose and safety she could not have consented to part with, for untried pleasures and a new existence. Called upon to judge and to act at an age when most girls are content to feel and dream, her faculties had become keen and somewhat cold, her thoughts fixed, her imagination paralysed. Her sound mind, her cheerful temper, her benevolent disposition, made her a valuable friend; and, young as she was, many an eye looked to her for counsel, many a heart leaned on her for support; but with the ordinary race of men she had nothing in common beyond the forms of politeness, which she scrupulously discharged. A foe to all exaggeration, her manner was as simple as her expressions; and it was not her fault if this invariable simplicity and calmness seemed mysterious to some and unnatural to others.

The secret of living was long ago defined by Pope to be the liking every thing and every body more than they deserved, and praising them beyond what we felt. Lady Rosamond might almost be said to be the reverse of this; she rarely liked any thing enough, for fear of overrating it; and she ventured not to praise, for either she condemned eulogy as insincere

or shrank from it as profane. That, indeed, was her own fault, for not believing common virtues entitled to praise, while with singular inconsistency she felt some high-souled actions to be above it. If Lady Avondale had, from circumstances, been unable to give her exactly the education she wished, she had taken care not to suffer her to be deficient in accomplishments; and as Lady Rosamond's just turn of mind taught her their proper value, they had become resources and amusements to herself, which made her very independent of others. It is a good thing to be able to do without foreign aid, but it is a secret we should keep, if we would not wound the self-love of our neighbours.

In the innocence of her heart, Lady Rosamond betrayed that she sought others from courtesy or habit, but that she did not need them; and took the first opportunity of retiring within herself, and withdrawing in mind, if not in body, from the society in which she was placed. Not having naturally any passion for talking, she spoke only when she had a reason for so doing: a mode of proceeding that, if generally indulged, would allow of our taking a nap at many a fashionable assembly, nay, even

at some intellectual *réunions*. The habit of silence which began in reserve, was continued from choice. When an active mind has decided on attending to others, instead of struggling for attention for itself, it is astonishing what food for rumination presents itself: how easily it learns to trace the motives of many a seemingly careless word, or to marvel at the absurdity of words without any motive at all!

There are some persons smitten with the malady of talking, who, in the overflowing of their hearts, give the worst possible opinion of their characters and dispositions. It would seem as if their frenzy must be gratified at whatever rate or risk, and that they trusted to their listeners being so occupied with themselves, that at least the half of their injudicious communications would be passed over and forgotten. Perhaps this may be one of the reasons why a silent being is so apt to intimidate and repel. We look upon him as a person who comes into society with a mask on; one who watches you, and never betrays himself. There is hardly any unpopularity to be acquired by levity of conversation, comparable to this species of unpopularity, and, if it does not often fix upon very young and unmarried women, it is owing

to the very general prejudice in favour of early youth and supposed timidity.

We continually find in the world two things confounded that are extremely different,—shyness and pride. Persons who never were shy themselves, and have no idea of what a miserable nightmare it is, are apt to throw every thing into the scale of haughtiness, while very good-humoured people, who have nearly as little comprehension of pride, excuse every thing like inattention or neglect from others, and call it shyness. De Lisle was both, and he was a little curious to know which Lady Rosamond was. It was true there was no constraint in her manner; but he knew manner could be acquired, and the very tranquil one she had adopted, brought her so little forward, that there might easily be real timidity beneath it. The conversation had turned on pictures, and he had asked her several questions, to which she had replied with as much conciseness as judgment.

A conversation of short question and answer is so like a child's horn-book, that no one has the courage to continue it long; he suffered it, therefore, to drop altogether, till Mrs. Seymour, mentioning that she was getting a group

of her children painted by a young artist of some celebrity in their neighbourhood, asked Lady Rosamond to sit to him, to surprise Lady Avondale when they met.

“If you knew,” replied the young lady, “what a cold shudder the thought of sitting for my picture gives me, you would not propose such a thing. I will tell you the history of all my pictures, and then you shall judge. Twice, when I was a child, I was scolded and terrified into sitting still, to be painted for my father,—and a cross little pale imp, I remember, they made of me each time. When I was fifteen, that large oil thing was done of me, for Lady Avondale, which you have seen on the head of the stairs, looking down with cold disdain on all who pass under it, and receiving the whole mass of light of a huge window opposite, on a face much too white to bear any at all. I should tell you, that what makes that so particularly ghastly, is that I was frightened the whole time by the basilisk eye of the painter, which was but too indicative, even then, of the malady which has since compelled him to retire from the world.

“Though disgusted with pictures, I yielded to the prayer of a young friend the following

year, and had a miniature taken, which was set with hair, and was a pretty thing, if not a likeness. It was quite a sentimental present, you see; but my first attempt at sentiment has not been encouraging, for our friendship the Fates have cooled, and my picture may have been long ago behind the fire, for any thing I know to the contrary. When poor Lord Avondale's mania for marrying two people who would rather have been hung, was at its height, nothing would satisfy him, but that Eveleyn and I must sit for our pictures, and give them to one another. We did so: mine looks as if I had been crying all the time, which was not far from the truth, and his, as if he had a great mind to knock the poor artist down. You shall judge,"—and lifting up the lid of her work-box, Lady Rosamond produced a little red case, which contained the picture of the young Lord Avondale.

"He certainly does look fiercer than I ever remember to have seen him," said Captain Seymour, smiling; "and I really am at a loss to understand how the idea of marrying you could put any man into a passion."

"It is at least as comprehensible," said Lady Rosamond, "as a woman crying her eyes out at

the thought of marrying Eveleyn, who is by much the best person I am acquainted with."

"Do you then mean to relent when there is no one to teaze you about it?"

"No, indeed; it is not my present intention to marry any one I don't care for, and still less any one who don't care for me."

"That's not very surprising. But I really thought, when Lord Avondale was here, he cared very much for you, and I did not observe that you disliked him."

"Dislike! Oh no! why should we dislike one another? We were brought up together—we loved one another very much till we were told we were to be married, and even that threat did not produce positive enmity. It was very near it once, though, but for Charles, who proved to us that we should mend nothing by it."

"I suspect," said Mrs. Seymour, "Lord Avondale would sooner have gained his point, had he offered you his second son. He seems docile, not to the turn of your eye, for you do not honour people by looking at them, but to the motion of your eyelash, which he watches and consults incessantly."

"Charles is considerably my junior," said Lady Rosamond, with cold gravity: "he is

very volatile, and I was always serious: he was not his father's favourite, and as he got into scrapes without end, I was the person he looked to to help him out of all difficulties. As a mere child, his wildness and extravagance required constant attention; when a youth, he was even less manageable, because his companions weakened by ridicule the influence I formerly possessed. You heard of his mad duel very shortly before his father's death (he was barely nineteen at the time). Lord Avondale required, or at least monopolized, almost all his wife's attention; and his poor boy, wounded in mind as well as body, would have died if I had deserted him. I could not do so, and I injured my own health. Charles saw it and felt it: any one would have done the same at the moment, but he has a heart, and therefore he does not forget it, as perhaps some giddy persons might have done."

"You have exculpated yourself, my dear, with more dignity than my random shot deserved; but since I have got you in a talking humour, let me profit by it, and give me the details of that duel. I heard at the time, that he fought almost without provocation, and was dangerously hurt. Ellen wrote me many pages of moralizing on the headstrong passions of

young men, and many a bitter philippic against the cold-heartedness of dashing widows; but beyond the fact of her hating Mrs. Werner, and grieving and fretting over Charles, I never got. Will you tell me 'all about it,' as a good gossip would say?"

"It is a long story, and I don't well know where to begin: besides, every body was in the wrong, and one likes in every story to have a faultless hero or heroine—some one to sympathize with and approve of."

"No doubt, in print; but I want a real story of real people, and I am afraid nothing is so natural as for all parties to be wrong, especially in any disagreement. Come, be a good girl and satisfy my curiosity—feminine curiosity you know; as for the gentlemen, as they are not curious, they may light their candles and go to bed."

"We will stay, however, this time," said Captain Seymour, "merely to oblige you; for though I once knew Mrs. Werner, and thought her an agreeable woman, I am naturally so equitable I don't care if she turns out as black as a certain foul spirit that shall be nameless."

"That, indeed, is making her over to my mercy; but I will strive and 'do my bidding gently.'"

## CHAPTER IV.

“IT is some time since Mrs. Werner came into the neighbourhood of Avondale Priory. She had a very pleasant house, always full of young people. The society might perhaps have been stigmatized by some as a little riotous, had not Mrs. Werner sought to disarm censure, by the greatest attention to several very dull persons, who had nothing to distinguish them but great correctness and regularity of habits. These were not her intimates, indeed; but willing to keep well with the world, she visited and flattered them, till they remained persuaded she would have seen more of them had she had more time. If she took this trouble even with the most insignificant, and “bought golden opinions of all manner of men,” it is not to be supposed she would overlook Lord and Lady Avondale. They were courted with great per-

severance and success. Lord Avondale thought her charming, and his wife was glad to be civil to any one that amused her husband, who was certainly the least amuseable of men.

“Not being quite old enough to go out, I was the more easily bribed by a little amusement. I used to ride on horseback, and thought it dull to gallop over a bleak down, followed only by my groom. Mrs. Werner rode out with me, and Mrs. Werner of course did not ride out alone. Sometimes, when our party had induced us to go farther than usual, if by chance we were nearer Mrs. Werner’s than Lord Avondale’s, I remained with her for that night, sending my horses home. Our intimacy was at its height. I forgot that I had thought her manners bold and forward, her countenance unamiable, and her conversation, though always lively and amusing, at times strange and unfeminine. She was so very kind to me, and helped me off so agreeably with my time, which hung heavily at home, that I should have thought myself ungrateful to have dwelt on small things that displeased me.

“The young men, when at home, accompanied me to Mrs. Werner’s; Charles, because the society amused him, Eveleyn, because his

father insisted on his being my shadow. This had gone on for two years at least, when a young friend and schoolfellow of mine, Honoria Conistone (the lady who has my picture), came to see me, and was presented to Mrs. Werner. She took an aversion to her, and railed at her incessantly. I thought it necessary to defend her to the utmost, and even Eveleyn, with whom she was no favourite, reproached Honoria with her bitterness, which he imagined arose from girlish jealousy on finding me so much occupied by my new friend.

“ ‘ It is quite fair,’ observed Honoria, ‘ that men should take her part, and be her dupes, because she lives but to please them ; but women, whom she so cordially hates, are too silly to be so taken in.’

“ Charles exclaimed against this assertion, and maintained that she sought the society of women as much as of men, and had a very great affection for me.

“ ‘ I do not dispute,’ said Miss Conistone, ‘ her attention to women, but you yourself must be aware, that except Rosamond, on whom so much sentiment is bestowed, no other woman passes for her friend. If you cannot see why she is an exception, I will tell you : the intimacy will do

her credit in the world, and in private she does not fear her. Lord Avondale has taken care to spread the report of her engagement to Eveleyn, —therefore, marrying her is out of the question, and flirting she holds in such magnanimous scorn, that the young men of Mrs. Werner's intimate set call her the icicle.' Eveleyn and Charles laughed at this attack on me, which was not quite as amusing to myself. Of course, it was nothing that I should have been quizzed in a society which quizzed every one; that my manners should be disliked by those who liked Mrs. Werner's; but it was something that a person I considered as my friend, should join against me in my absence. I had often been *her* champion when I had not been quite sure she was right, and yet she abandoned me to the mockery of idle boys! It galled me, and I went straight to her to investigate the truth of the statement.

“ She denied it all, shed many tears, and convinced me that I was the person to blame, for having ever doubted so true a friend. I was glad of it, and making apologies where I ought to have received them, I hurried home to relate to Honoria all that had passed. She looked steadfastly at me, listened to all I had to say,

then said with great coldness, not unmixed with disdain,

“ ‘When Lady Rosamond Trevannon has learnt to know her friends from her enemies, we will resume this subject, but not till then. I cannot dispute your heart with a Mrs. Werner ;’ and she turned contemptuously away.

“ All this gave me great pain, for I loved Honoria, and trusted her ; while Mrs. Werner had merely thrown a sort of charm about me, through which I saw occasionally that our modes of thinking and feeling but ill accorded. We were now split into factions : Eveleyn sided with Honoria, and Charles with me. Unexpectedly, Miss Conistone was summoned home. I was grieved, and so was she, but her sorrow was not for me ! I saw it plainly, and felt it deeply. It required all the insidious caresses of Mrs. Werner to revive my drooping spirits after the departure of a friend I had so highly valued and perceived I had lost. Soon after, Eveleyn left us to travel. On his return, we were to be united. So, at least, Lord Avondale intended, but, as we should be of age by that time, the prospect did not alarm us much. We parted, and Eveleyn’s last words were prophetic.

“ ‘ Beware,’ said he, ‘ of Mrs. Werner ! she will do you and Charles a mischief if she can.’ ”

“ He had hardly gone when I fancied her house less agreeable than formerly. Eveleyn, to please his father, never left my elbow ; but, desirous to weaken the report of our engagement, had made a point with Charles that he should be equally attentive. On his brother’s departure he was at liberty to devote himself to any one else ; which he did, and left me to shift for myself. Even Mrs. Werner began to neglect me. I was not intimate with any one besides herself, and feeling ill at ease, I gradually discontinued going to her house without Lady Avondale. Her flirtation with Charles began to be much talked of, and to prevent its doing her a serious injury, she was more than ever desirous to be countenanced by his family. It was therefore worth while to soothe me back again. She suddenly complained of her health ; shut her doors to her gay associates, and implored me to take compassion on her, and spend a few days with her *quite alone*.

“ I was very willing to comply. Charles drove me over in his father’s curriole, and was to leave me at the door ; but Mrs. Werner was at the window when we arrived ; he had been

seen, and must therefore go up and make his bow. She insisted that the horses should rest, and he might return home after dinner. In the evening it proved dark and wet, and he remained: in short, I had not been four-and-twenty hours in the house before I saw through the whole plan. My grief was lost in indignation. On the second morning I arose early, ordered one of Mrs. Werner's horses, that I had been in the habit of mounting, and galloped home. I sent a note back by the servant, saying, that a restless, uncomfortable night made me fear an illness, which would be inconvenient from under my own roof, and that, wishing to spare her all embarrassment, I had taken my departure before breakfast. My note was of course unanswered. Ten days after, Charles came home, and to my careless inquiry after Mrs. Werner's health, he replied impetuously that I need not add hypocrisy to cruelty, and, after exposing my friend's character by my abrupt desertion, affect to care how she felt. I replied quietly, that I left her character in her own hands, and was no way inclined to expose mine for her amusement.

“ He left me in great wrath, which cooled, however, when he found his father in ignorance

of his proceedings. When asked after Charles, I had said he had visits to pay, and I did not know when he would be home. The report, however, arose of his long and solitary visit to the widow, though it reached not the Priory. There was a ferment in the neighbourhood; people knew not what to believe, and, to be on the safe side, avoided calling on Mrs. Werner. There was a great ball pending, to which she had been invited previous to these circumstances; and as Lord Avondale was more than usually ailing, his wife intended sending me with Mrs. Werner. I wished to decline going altogether, for the thought of meeting my former friend was distressing. I could not think of her without my face getting hot; and besides, I felt that, after all the reports, my appearing in public with another person would do her much harm. I had received a great deal of kindness from her for a long space of time; and whether interested or not, I was unwilling to injure her in return.

“A relation of my father’s, a Mrs. Villars, came to see us, and relieved me from all my embarrassment, since it was proper and natural that I should go out with a person who was Lady Avondale’s guest, and my own connexion. We

did go. I danced all the evening, and as Mrs. Werner and I mutually wished to avoid each other, we succeeded, and stood in different sets. Fearful of being less fortunate at supper, I had begged of Mrs. Villars not to stay. Unluckily, Mrs. Werner also dreaded the supper; and as I came out into a large anteroom on one side, with Mrs. Villars and her son, who was my partner, Charles and the widow appeared opposite. Passing each other was inevitable. There were just persons enough to observe us, and space enough to lose none of our motions. Mrs. Werner's first impulse was to stop and arrange the folds of her shawl with great attention. She would have spoken to some one, but every body drew back and looked at me. At this universal retreat, Charles turned crimson and pale alternately; he looked fiercely at the spectators, and turned with redoubled tenderness and respect to his mistress.

“I could not bear the despair of his countenance, and withdrawing my hand from my partner's arm, I held it out to Mrs. Werner, with some civil inquiry after her health. She recovered her self-possession immediately, remembered some of her accustomed phrases of blandishment, and talked and looked for the

public, without any shame at sinking herself lower than ever in my esteem. Captain and Mrs. Villars had heard nothing of Mrs. Werner, and saw nothing in our meeting. He had been introduced to her by Charles, had danced with her in the course of the evening, and with the bluntness of his profession called her a flirting old woman, and laughed very much at Charles's devotion to her faded charms. After we got home I was sitting over my fire, too broad awake to think of undressing, pondering over Charles's thralldom and Mrs. Werner's effrontery, when he himself knocked at my door. I opened it, fearing his father might be worse.

“ ‘ Dear, generous Rosa!’ exclaimed he, ‘ I am come to ask my pardon and confess my sins.’

“ Mrs. Werner's want of feeling for every thing but herself had astonished him, and I soon found that nothing fretted him so much as not seeing how he could break with her. If he no longer loved her, I thought the most prudent thing would be to do so by degrees; if he distrusted himself, he had nothing left for it but flight. Every one was going to the seaside; Mrs. Werner followed the fashion; and as Charles resolutely refused to go and join

her, I began to hope he had quite recovered his senses. During the six weeks of her absence, he was very low, but very reasonable; when she returned, he was not much gayer, but very much less calm. She wrote to him, flattered him, and fettered him once more. He wore his chains reluctantly, but he wore them, and fearing my representations, naturally avoided and neglected me. I was sorry for it, but as there is no stemming the tide at London Bridge, or managing a youth of nineteen, I gave up all thought of the matter, and tried to hope, if he would not leave her, she would certainly leave him, and the less struggle that was made about it, the sooner that would occur.

“ Mrs. Werner and I never met but in public, when a distant bow just served to show we had not come to an open rupture. She was so much more cautious in her conduct, and had ridiculed with so much grace and talent, what she was pleased to term the ‘boyish fancy’ of young Avondale, that people began to suppose it might be rather a matter of absurdity than of guilt. Some, indeed, were staggered by the coolness between us, but she insinuated a very plausible story to meet these suspicions: according to her, Villars (whom she hated) was

my avowed and favoured lover, and I had resented her friendly remonstrances in behalf of Eveleyn, to whom my engagement was so well known.

“ Charles was now seldom seen with me, and, of course, he was vexed for his brother, and condemned me. Villars at last left us, and as I went about as usual, and, although he went to sea directly, neither trembled at gales, nor fainted over reported shipwrecks, this rumour lost much of its credit. However, people were glad of an excuse for not giving up a pleasant house, and they pretended to believe as much as was necessary for the peace of their own consciences.

“ There was in our immediate neighbourhood a Lady Elliot, who had set her heart on marrying me to her only son. He was a fine-looking man, not much turned of thirty, but to all appearance at least ten years older. I had seen him frequently at his mother's, liked him very well, and not thinking him at all young, talked to him willingly, not supposing it could be construed into a flirtation. Whether he fancied this preference went farther than it meant to go, or merely conceded to his mother's wishes, I am not able to inform you ; but about this time he

signified his intentions, in a very bashaw style, of settling his thousands upon me, with a name, he assured me, for which I need not regret to barter even that of Trevannon! Had I been a heroine, I must have shrieked and ran away, so utter and boundless was my amazement; but I remembered in time that this would not sound well out of a book, so I put together the very smoothest words that could mean 'no,' and left him quite as much surprised with the result of his application, as I had been with the application itself.

“ I said nothing at home of this, for, when there is no doubt on the matter, it is not fair to betray a man's secret and canvass his pretensions, but Lady Elliot sent for Charles and laid her distresses before him. Charles promised to be her friend; and indeed told me, that as I did not mean to marry Eveleyn, I could not better put an end to the persecution I had suffered on that subject, than by taking Sir Noel Elliot. I could not, however, be made to comprehend the wisdom of marrying one man to secure me from another, especially as I had no fear whatever of Eveleyn's urging me to do a thing to which he was himself averse. Charles at this time was not pleased with any thing I did—he

complained of my coldness and unpersuadableness to Mrs. Werner, who immediately courted Sir Noel, as a means of tormenting me.

“ Sir Noel was made to believe that I had ridiculed his suit and his years. He declaimed violently against me; informed every one of a circumstance that, but for himself, might have been buried in silence; and took care in public to show all possible attention to Mrs. Werner, that I might no longer flatter myself with having any power over him. I was quite aware before, that the thread by which I held him was slender enough—and it was so welcome to break! Mrs. Werner, proud of her conquest over ‘the baby beauty,’ as she called me, on account of my fairness, devoted herself so entirely to Sir Noel, that Charles was furious. Her inconstancy revived all the violence of his passion; and now in want of a confidante, he came to me and stormed and raved till he was hoarse. I tried to prevail upon him to leave home for a time; he said he would not basely yield the ground to his rival.

“ Alas! my influence was at an end. Accustomed to Mrs. Werner’s brilliant mode of expressing herself, more demonstrative manner, and to an affection warmer, if not as sin-

cere as mine, my most earnest sympathy and kindest soothings fell cold on his heart. He reproached me as indifferent and callous, unable to guess what he suffered, and reckless of it. I wished him to permit me to speak to Lady Avondale; her vivid feelings and energetic manner of expressing them no one could doubt, nor could he refuse to believe in her enthusiasm and tenderness.

“ ‘Enthusiasm,’ exclaimed Charles, ‘she has plenty; but it is only for what is excellent—there is no room for enthusiasm here. I tell you what, Rosa, she would not look calmly and sadly at me as you do; she would weep and mourn my degradation! Think you *that* would console me?’ ”

“It was thus he struggled with evil passions, and with all the frightful consciousness that they were evil, which changed the gentlest temper into fierceness, and veiled his sunny brow in deepest darkness. I could do nothing; for though I longed to consult Lady Avondale, without his permission the thing was impossible.

“A public concert was given in the nearest town to us. Lord Avondale loved music, and it was agreed we should go. The room was

very full, but every one made way for our party. Immediately after our arrival, Mrs. Werner came in. Though a person of no rank, and naturally of no consequence, she had, like many dashing women, the habit of claiming what was not her due, with such an easy and careless grace, that all idea of resisting her pretensions was out of the question. She accordingly made her way to the top of the room; and several gentlemen who knew her, having fallen back, she was placed in our vicinity. To do her justice, she looked at first annoyed and uncomfortable; but rallying her spirits, she intrenched herself with beaux, and feigning suddenly to discover us, she included the whole party in one gracious bow, making a sign that conversation was impossible as the music had begun.

“ Her salutation was returned, though somewhat coolly, by Lord Avondale and myself; Charles turned away his head; and Lady Avondale looked for a moment calmly at her, and then withdrew her eyes without having acknowledged her courtesy by the slightest bend of recognition. I was a little surprised at this, for I had never heard her name Mrs. Werner; and feeling it unpleasant to canvass the conduct of a person I had once thought differently of, I did not in

the beginning detail my own grievances; and when all feeling for her had worn away, I could not discuss her proceedings without implicating Charles. I was half sorry for her at this moment, for, though it may be right to punish, it never can be agreeable to see the effect of your punishment; and when Mrs. Werner blushed through her rouge, and involuntarily shaded her face with her hand, I could only remember that I once cared for her, and that she suffered!

“The momentary pang, however, was soon lost in complacency at Sir Noel Elliot’s attention. He stood the whole evening behind her chair, and either was, or appeared to be, as devoted as ever I had seen Charles. We arose to leave the room rather early, and while we lingered at the head of the stairs, Mrs. Werner’s carriage was called. Many voices ordered it away, saying “she was not ready to go;” but the coachman sent her word, “it might be very late before he could fall into the line again, as the crowd was great.” Supposing that we were gone, for we had left the concert-room some time, she obeyed the summons, and passed us, leaning on Sir Noel’s arm, and followed by several younger men, who were all eager to hand her into her carriage. She went by

Lord and Lady Avondale so quickly, that she might very well have been supposed not to have seen them; but Charles and I were some steps lower down, and she could not escape us.

“ ‘Ha! my dear Charles,’ said she in her most protecting tone, holding out her forefinger to him, ‘I almost overlooked you in this crowd.’

“ ‘Indeed, Ma’am!’ said Charles sarcastically, ‘that I am sure would be the first time such a thing ever occurred to you:’ he made a motion at the same time, as if repulsing her hand, which she drew back directly with a look—such a look! I did not think a woman’s eye could express such fierce malignant hostility. She went on, but stooped to Sir Noel, whispering something in his ear: he seemed in consequence to look back on us somewhat indignantly, but in comparison of *her* countenance his look was mildness itself.

“ Our carriage was next to Mrs. Werner’s. We did not return home that night, but slept at an hotel in the town. When we reached it, there was a great crowd upon the steps, of persons in the house, for it was very full, and rabble in the street, gazing at the company as they left their carriages. I saw with the gentlemen two or three whom I knew, and among

them Sir Noel Elliot. He seemed watching us attentively, and when Lord Avondale and his wife had passed him, he affected to stumble, and fell against me. I drew back, for I could not pass him; and Charles, whose temper had been severely tried that evening, impatiently asked, who had dared to run against me?

“ ‘ It is I,’ said I quickly, ‘ who ran against Sir Noel;—I hope I have not hurt you?’ I added, looking towards him; and he had nothing left for it but to bow and apologize, but he did it with so ill a grace, that I saw Charles eye him suspiciously. We went up stairs, however, and I began to hope all was safe. We found in the inn-parlour an old friend of Lord Avondale’s, who, having seen him by chance in the concert-room, had made a point of shaking hands with him before he went to bed. They had not met for some years, and remained therefore talking a little while. One or two other acquaintances also looked in to wish us good-night, and, unfortunately, Charles was induced to go down stairs to a sort of club or coffee-room. He there found Sir Noel, and, excited by his unwelcome presence, may possibly have given his opinion of the music and performers in a more dictatorial and arro-

gant manner than was altogether suited to his years.

“Sir Noel observed sneeringly, that fortunately every one was not obliged to adopt his view of the matter, and that he, for his part, would not be dictated to. Charles angrily asked what he meant; and Sir Noel, with a low bow, contemptuously replied, ‘Exactly what you please, young man.’

“The altercation ended in a challenge given by Charles, and accepted by Sir Noel. The latter part was rather guessed than known, but the former had been loud and public. The waiters mentioned it to our servants; and when I went to my room to undress, I was met by my maid, pale and trembling, who assured me ‘Mr. Charles might be a corpse on the morrow, all along of that vile Sir Noel Elliot!’

“I had hardly had it explained to me, when I heard a step in the passage, which I fancied might be Charles’s, and opened my door, meaning to call him. It was not he, but his rival. My first impulse was to draw back, my second to speak to Sir Noel. I advanced, and told him I knew he was too well-bred to refuse a lady’s request, and therefore begged he would give me five minutes of his time.

“ ‘Who can refuse Hebe any thing!’ exclaimed he, glancing at my dishevelled appearance; and I now remembered I had taken the wreath of flowers off my head, and the comb out of my hair, so that I looked rather wilder and more poetical than was quite decorous. I was provoked, however, at such an observation just then, and, throwing the flowers I still held on the floor, I confined once more my crazy-looking tresses, and desiring my maid to bring a candle into the parlour, I entered it with Sir Noel. He looked surprised at my making my maid a sign to stay, and I certainly should have been glad, for the moment, to have deprived her of the sense of hearing; but any thing was better than to have been supposed to have sat up alone with a man who was known to have proposed to me.

Our conversation was not very long. I mentioned what I had just heard, and asked him what honour he could expect to reap from a duel with a fiery boy, stung to madness by the desertion and treachery of a woman, whose real character Sir Noel could not be deceived in, though Charles perhaps might. He was at first unwilling to allow that Mrs. Werner was at all implicated in the matter. I said that I did not

pay him so bad a compliment as to imagine he condescended to be the instrument of Mrs. Werner's vengeance, but that he should make some allowance for Charles's situation and wounded feelings. He looked at me with a smile, and asked why I did not share Charles's belief with respect to the sincerity of his homage to the gay widow. I said what was true, and yet what would be likely to please and flatter him ; and he appeared at last so well inclined to believe me, in preference to the insinuations he had latterly listened to, that I left him with a faint hope that, if properly spoken to, he might, perhaps, make some disclaiming speech on the ground, which the seconds might choose to consider as an apology.

“ It was not till some hours after, I remembered his compliments about the improvement that unusual emotion produced in me, coupled with the insinuation that he owed it to Charles that his suit to me had failed. The notion of my being in love with a boy, who was himself in love with some one else, appeared to me the height of absurdity ; but I soon found that all men are alike, and attribute anxiety to only one sort of affection. I had written a line to Mr. Leeson, who I understood from

Sir Noel was likely to be Charles's second. I had only a musical acquaintance with this young man: he played on the flute, and when the mistress of a house began to find it uphill work to entertain her guests, I was continually called upon to sit down to the piano-forte, with Mr. Leeson to accompany me. We had, for a considerable time now, played the same airs together, and said the same things to one another without making any progress towards ordinary intimacy; but, as we were, nevertheless, supposed to know each other extremely well, there was nothing in my writing to him more than to any one else. I received a very civil answer, though Charles was spoken of as a most enviable person to excite even *my* interest! as if I had been incapable of interest about any thing! I had changed my dress, but without going to bed, for it was broad daylight; and though I knew neither the hour, nor the spot fixed upon for the meeting, every casual noise in the hotel seemed to me the prelude of disaster.

“ I had written to Charles, in the hope of pacifying him respecting Sir Noel by the assurance that his affectation of devoting himself to Mrs. Werner was with no view to offend him,

but merely a sort of bravado to me. When I found he had left the inn, I sent my maid to his room to seek there for any answer he might have left for me. He had written one indeed in case he fell, but it was only to be delivered on that event. His servant left it for a moment on the table, not aware that any one was up who might enter his room ; and it was brought to me. I now knew whither he might be followed, and instantly proceeded to Lord Avondale's apartment. He was not up, and, drawing aside his curtain, he asked, was it Ellen? On hearing my voice, he readily guessed something was wrong, and nearly what it was, for he exclaimed, 'Come, Rosa, child, out with it ; some foolish prank of Master Charles's, is that it?' I told my tale rapidly, and gave the letter.

“ ‘ I thank you,’ said he, throwing it off his bed ; ‘ I know, women love to weep, but I don't. The puppy may get no harm after all, and it will always be too soon to lament. I never do so before the time.’

“ ‘ But we need not lament at all !’ said I. ‘ We know where he is, and this can be stopped.’

“ ‘ Rosa,’ said he sternly, ‘ do you love Charles, and desire to see him disgraced? He

has provoked his fate, and must stand to it. Would you have a soldier's son draw back ?

“ I had till then been buoyed up by something like hope, but it seemed to me to expire at this moment. If his own father deserted him, would not every one else urge him forward ? I fancied his fate sealed, and bowing in silence to Lord Avondale, for I could not speak, I turned away.

“ ‘ Rosa, my dear,’ said he in a faint voice, ‘ come hither !’ and I obeyed mechanically. ‘ I have a favour to ask of you,’ continued Lord Avondale : ‘ it is, that you will not mention this till necessary, to my wife : spare her for a few hours at least ; for she loves my poor boy,’—and his voice sank to a whisper. I pressed the trembling hand he held out to me, and promised obedience to his wishes.”

“ Pardon my interruption, Lady Rosamond,” cried Seymour, “ but this consideration for Ellen's feelings was surely uncommon in Lord Avondale.”

“ By no means ; he loved and admired her, and would have shielded her from all evil but of his own creating. He considered himself privileged to torment her, but he shared that privilege with no one, and could not bear ‘ the

breath of heaven to visit her cheek too roughly.' He was a man I did not like, but for whom I often felt compassion."

"And why so? He appeared to me to have every thing he could wish for."

"Yes, every thing but *le talent du bonheur*. He was very proud of his wife's beauty and talents, and loved to display both; but if he fancied the admiration she excited took a hair's breadth more earnestness than he liked, he was wretched. Divided between vanity and jealousy, he was urged on by opposite feelings to the most inconsistent conduct, which would have made an ordinary woman timid and constrained. But Lady Avondale has about her a high-souled consciousness of integrity, that rises without effort superior to the waywardness or caprice of others. She was so calm when he was furious, so gentle when he was grieved, so completely mistress of herself at all times, it was no wonder that she had a regular and increasing influence over others. Probably, had she loved him a little more, or had he loved her a little less, they would have made a very happy couple. She paid him marked attention in public; she owed it to her own dignity and sense of duty to do so—and she showed him great kindness in

private; but there is no defrauding love of its dues, and it was quite evident, even to me, who am slow in these matters, that he was paid for the most passionate tenderness in base coin. I pitied him, for he suffered much, though I was sometimes doubtful whether she was not the more uncomfortable of the two."

"How," said Mrs. Seymour, "can you make that out, my dear? I can fancy it very painful and irritating to dwell perpetually near a person you love, and who deserves that love, and yet will not return it; but surely the less Ellen loved her husband, the less she suffered from his defects. Indifference saves us so much! for it makes the hand that strikes powerless to wound."

"But think," dear Mrs. Seymour, "of the shackles on the mind when so much more is expected than you can pay. She has so warm a heart, she must often have felt something like remorse at the display of an affection she could not return; and in his case you should not forget that the mere pleasure of loving is something."

"Lady Rosamond! who would have expected such a sentiment from you?"

"As you say," she replied, with a half smile, "see what it is to talk so much! one don't

know at last what one says. I assure you I am getting quite worn out and giddy; so I will finish in two words. After a long confinement, Charles recovered both the use of his limbs and of his senses. Mrs. Werner left the country almost immediately after the result of the duel was known. She remembered suddenly an invalid sister of her husband's, who resided at Bath, and could not live any longer without her; by which means she avoided meeting any of our family. We went to the sea-side for my health; and Charles soon recovered his buoyant spirits, and even met Sir Noel Elliot without apparently recalling any of those unpleasant circumstances with which I should have thought his presence associated."

Lady Rosamond stopped, really looking as much fatigued as she had said she was; and although Captain Seymour and his wife continued to comment on what she had related, she did not add another word.

## CHAPTER V.

DE LISLE, who had hardly made a single observation on Lady Rosamond's narration, did not, however, dismiss it immediately from his mind. On Mrs. Werner he did not bestow a thought—the world, according to his indifferent opinion of his fellow-creatures, was full of such women ; and young Avondale was quite as common a character—one for whom he felt little interest, and less esteem. He had himself outgrown such follies, and, as is often the case, he forgot to show that indulgence to others, which he had at one time been disposed to claim for himself, and to which he probably then thought himself fully entitled. To him the prominent persons in this transaction were just those who had been least alluded to. Ellen was the only one whose feelings were any thing to him ; and the more he pondered over her

destiny, the less he comprehended it. He could not hear without emotion the suppositions of Seymour and his wife, as to her making another and more fortunate choice. Nothing indeed seemed more probable. She was but seven-and-thirty, hardly impaired in beauty; and even those who could be insensible to her fascinating manners, her various talents, and her personal charms, might be attracted by her ample jointure, and that magic which rank possesses in the eyes of the multitude.

There are many persons too, who, without any natural inclination for matrimony, look upon it as a debt they must pay sooner or later. These persons are sometimes apprehensive how a young girl may turn out. The retiring manners that are advisable and decorous in a spinster, are not those to be wished for in the mistress of a family: besides, so many demure misses have made dashing wives, and so many giddy girls very sober matrons! It is a lottery, in which it is impossible to see daylight; but you diminish the chances against you by taking a widow, who has proved what her married conduct will be, and has played well her part in society. Free, too, as she stood from all ties, from having no children,

there was no embarrassment to be feared, no neglect of one duty for another.

De Lisle, who had not quite this view of the matter, would rather have married Ellen Parry than Lady Avondale; but he was perfectly aware numbers would be of a different opinion, and he could not doubt that, if she entered into no fresh engagement, it would be her own fault. He would have liked to have heard Lady Rosamond's opinion respecting the possibility of such an event, but he did not like to call upon her directly; and indirectly he could gain nothing, for she not only disliked giving opinions in general, but seemed particularly to evade this subject, as unpleasant to her. The fact simply was, that Lady Rosamond, though very happy living with Lady Avondale, thought the chances were, she should not be happy with Lady Avondale's husband. She did not therefore willingly anticipate an event that, though possible, she did not think probable, and which was by no means certain of adding to the happiness of one, for whom she would gladly have sacrificed a portion of her own.

Although Mrs. Seymour's health rarely allowed of her going out, she continued to see company at home, that her husband might not find

the house too dull. In proportion as more persons arrived, De Lisle saw less and less of the "fair heiress," as Captain Seymour sometimes called her. Lady Rosamond's beauty was for day-light, nothing was too trying for such a complexion, and the faint but lovely bloom on her cheek, was lost in the blaze of candles and lamps. Of an evening she was so white and quiet, that there was hardly any young woman in the room who had not more effect, though it is true that very handsome ones looked coarse when near her.

At dinner Sir Hubert's place was fixed beside the lady of the house, while Lady Rosamond chose hers by their host; at breakfast she was always early, and he was always late, so that she was surrounded before he came in. She was not a person to address across a table, for the chances were that she would, so situated, make no other reply than by an inclination of the head; the usual salutations therefore, on meeting and separating, were the amount of their conversation, and Sir Hubert, when engaged in discourse with his next neighbour, whether male or female, was evidently unconscious of Lady Rosamond's presence.

As he had been so much struck with her at

first, Augusta rallied him on his fickle temper ; while he maintained he had paid the homage due to beauty, and was not bound, after having admired her one day, to fall in love with her the next. In vain Mrs. Seymour talked of the glory of thawing so icy a being, and of kindling into something like life, those eyes of serene and holy blue, which refused to look at any thing, lest by gazing they might grow to care for it. De Lisle confessed his laziness, and declared himself to be by nature too reserved to rejoice in a similarly shy temper : that two persons always drawing back, could not be expected to meet : that he did not doubt Lady Rosamond's capacity for affection, calm as she looked, nor its improving her should she ever feel it ; but the mighty task of inspiring it, probably beyond his powers, was clearly unsuited to his inclination. Mrs. Seymour might be right in likening her guest to a fine instrument in admirable tune, but wanting the additional keys ; his was not the skilful hand to furnish them ; and when he played on an instrument, he must have it complete, without any labour on his part.

Augusta laughed at him ; assured him, if he indulged in such idleness, he would end by

taking any woman who proposed to him ; and De Lisle, joining in the laugh, agreed that it would save him a great deal of trouble.

One day, when Captain Seymour and his guests came in to dinner, they found the whole house panic-struck, the scarlet fever having been pronounced to be in the nursery. The sick children were instantly separated from those who were well ; the company was rapidly dispersing, some dreading the complaint, and some fearing to be troublesome. In the general confusion, Lady Rosamond was the only person perfectly quiet and ready to be useful. When she found Mrs. Seymour's having ever had the fever was doubtful, and that her husband implored her not uselessly to expose herself to the contagion, she offered to visit the two invalids as frequently as Mrs. Seymour could desire, and to state honestly how they were ; as, in case of the smallest danger, Augusta could not be withheld from attending to them herself. Lady Rosamond had had this disorder only the preceding year, so that Mrs. Seymour reluctantly assented to this arrangement, and consented to sit in an outward room, where she could almost hear the infants breathe.

De Lisle rather wondered that it occurred to no one that the scarlet fever might be had more than once, and ventured to remind Lady Rosamond of it.

“ I have heard so,” answered she, “ but I believe it is not common; neither is it usual for a grown-up person to take any malady from a child. It is enough to guard against probable evils: I leave possible ones to shift for themselves.”

Since she was aware of the risk, De Lisle had nothing more to say; and the following day, it was decided that it was only the scarlatina, from which little or no danger was apprehended. Still there was confinement and care necessary, and Seymour, who thought a sick house a very dull thing, was no sooner free from all anxiety, than he proposed to De Lisle to accompany him into the next county, where there was a cricket-match he was in the habit of attending. They set off accordingly, but found the meeting so thinly attended, that they returned a day before they were expected; and both, on their arrival, made their way softly to that outward room, in which Mrs. Seymour had nearly lived since the illness of her children, and in the window of which they saw lights as they drove up to the house.

She was not there at that moment, and the feeble light burnt so dimly they could hardly distinguish any one : at last, a chance blaze from the fire showed a couple of sleepers. Lady Rosamond was seated in a large easy chair, her head reclining on its back, her eyes closed, and her long dark eyelashes shading a cheek more than usually pale—while stretched in her arms lay the youngest boy, whose restless breathing betrayed an uneasy slumber. Seymour and his friend, fearing to disturb either of them, knew not whether to advance or retire, when Lady Rosamond's dozing was interrupted by a moan of her little patient. She bent her head over him, but, perceiving it was but a murmur in his sleep, resumed her former attitude. The child continuing to form indistinct sounds, as if struggling with an unpleasant dream, she gently altered his position. The boy, half roused, grasped her throat with his tiny fingers, saying in a sleepy tone, " Pretty Lady Rosy, what have you done with mamma ?"

" Mamma's gone to bed, dear ! and you will go too—won't you ?"

" If you please," replied the child, too drowsy to contend with her ; and accordingly, getting up, she carried him into the next room,

and placed him in his bed. The nurse at this moment came up from her supper, and Lady Rosamond willingly resigned her charge. On returning to the room she had just quitted, she found the gentlemen, and had no difficulty in quieting Captain Seymour's uneasiness for his wife. The child had insisted on sleeping on his mother's lap all the afternoon, and she was in consequence so much fatigued that she had gone to bed immediately after tea. Lady Rosamond's kindness in becoming her substitute was duly acknowledged, and some surprise expressed at the children, who had been thought to be recovering, requiring still so much care and such constant attention. Lady Rosamond explained that they had not relapsed, and that the girl had been dressed and sitting up the greater part of the day, but that the boy, having had more fever, was much reduced, and feeling uneasy and feeble, it was rather troublesome to prevent his being cross, especially towards evening.

The time approached when Captain Seymour was to escort his guest to General Parry's; but in the state of his family he did not like leaving his wife alone, and De Lisle offered to replace him; but to this Lady Rosamond would not consent. She had her own carriage

and servants, and declined any other attendants. Sir Hubert, who was not accustomed to have his offers of service rejected, was half piqued, and accused the young lady of prudery. Seymour, who was grateful for her attention to his children, openly took her part, and asked De Lisle if he had intended to travel with her in the same carriage, like Darby and Joan, or merely to precede her at the inns, and order her horses, which on that road were sure to be ready, whether bespoke or not? To this Sir Hubert made no reply; but as shy men hate to commit themselves to no purpose, and to be thwarted in any unusual exertion, he retained a sort of inward dissatisfaction against Lady Rosamond, which did not quite wear off, even after he had met her several times at General Parry's. It died away at last, more because he was occupied with something else, than from any change of feeling; so that he forgot her without doing her justice.

Lady Rosamond perceived she was no favourite, and wondered to find that she was rather sorry for it. It was true she had not taken any measures to be otherwise, nor could she now. That would have been going counter both to her natural temper and to her acquired

principles; but still, when she saw Sir Hubert so cordially greeted by every one, and so desirous of pleasing or serving all around him, she marvelled that she alone should be out of the pale of his benevolence, and regretted that she alone could not extend the hand of friendship to him. The more she thought over her exclusion from his regard, and marked his peculiar attention to Lady Avondale, the more uncomfortable she felt. She could not wish that he might not be serious in that attention, for the chances that her kind adopted mother would find happiness in such a union, appeared to her very great; but it was certainly unfortunate for her, who felt little disposed to reside with De Lisle, and doubted whether he himself would not think with dismay of such an incumbrance.

The more she contemplated this subject, the greater scope her imagination took, till at last she actually persuaded herself she might be a bar to his proposing to Lady Avondale; and she instantly determined to take the first opportunity of letting him know, as if by chance, that should her friend marry again, it was her intention to take up her abode with a Mrs. Trevannon, who had adopted and brought up

her younger sister, Elizabeth. The thought of parting from Lady Avondale, who was inexpressibly dear to her, and seeing her united to a man who would probably do his best to make her forget the orphan she had reared, drew many tears from the envied daughter of Earl Marrison; but a little cold water quickly destroyed all traces of them, and no one at General Parry's, save Lady Avondale herself, cared whether the smile with which she appeared in society was real or fictitious.

Charles and his brother were gone. Young Mrs. Parry, the General's daughter-in-law, had unluckily taken an aversion to Lady Rosamond, from the moment her husband had somewhat incautiously expressed his admiration of her dancing. Any other accomplishment Mrs. J. Parry would have conceded without a pang; but she herself being the best dancer in the county, could not forgive Lady Rosamond her superiority on so important a matter, and least of all, its being acknowledged by her husband. This double jealousy made the house as uncomfortable as possible to its innocent object, and even Mrs. Parry's mild courteousness, and the General's somewhat antiquated gallantry, failed to put her at her ease.

Her situation was somewhat ameliorated by the arrival of Mr. and Mrs. Solway. The latter, without any particularly strong affection for her, at least knew her to be sensible, believed her to be amiable, and treated her accordingly. She saw, and, with her accustomed equity, reprobated the slighting and negligent conduct of her sister-in-law. Solway would never have found it out, for these are little things that the cleverest men see only when they are pointed out to them; but once aware of it, he avenged her with a high hand, no one could do it better. His presence was like a flood of light which vivified and reanimated all things; but when he chose to concentrate the rays on any particular object, he lent to it for the time an effect and colouring not its own. By aid of this magic Lady Rosamond burst forth like the sun from behind a cloud. Solway, in his endeavour to bring her forward, proceeded at first cautiously; but when he found he had nothing to fear, and that her silence might proceed from reserve, indifference, or indolence, but never from incapacity, he pushed boldly on, delighted with that collision of intellect, of which only the highly-gifted have any notion.

What he began from benevolence, he continued because it was agreeable; and Lady Rosamond, roused and stimulated into existence, dismissing the thoughts that had depressed her spirits, and thankful for the real good he had done her, naturally courted his society more than she had ever done that of any one before, and repaid kindness by reciprocal feeling. She remembered every song he wished to hear, finished every quotation he was at a loss for, entered into the spirit of every anecdote he related, till Mrs. Solway declared she must go home before her husband was entirely bewitched, and while he would yet condescend to listen to her. This was said so good humouredly, Lady Rosamond took it, as it was meant, merely as a compliment; but Mrs. J. Parry, who was one of those persons born with an incapacity (and not a very rare one) of distinguishing between jest and earnest, privately hinted to Jane that Lady Rosamond was a dangerous person, whom she did not recommend to trust too much with her husband; that, for her own part, she had resolved against asking her to her house, though Colonel Parry wished so much to invite his sister.

Mrs. Solway could have marvelled at her

absurdity, and resented her impertinence, but she remembered that she should not thereby improve her sister-in-law's disposition or manners ; so she held her peace, though she could not help perceiving that it was impossible to fix on any calumny that some one would not be found to credit, when there was a woman in her own family who could mistake Lady Rosamond for a coquette, and Solway for a flirt.

Mrs. J. Parry herself could not be more surprised at what she witnessed than was De Lisle. He had known Solway only since his attachment to Jane, and though what is usually called a very pleasant person in society, he had never seen him converse with any other woman for so long or in so animated a manner as he now did with Lady Rosamond. The effect upon her was even more marvellous. He wondered she would not be as agreeable when talking to him. His self-love was slightly wounded at perceiving how much could be elicited from a woman who had seldom answered him but in short and cold monosyllables. It was true, Solway courted her more than he had ever done ; but he fancied she was at any rate more prepared to like him. It was new to Sir Hubert to be altogether left out of the

calculations of a woman of twenty. He had indeed had a surfeit of forward misses and dashing matrons, but it did not therefore follow that he was flattered at being an object of such utter indifference to so lovely, and he now discovered so clever a woman.

One day, when he met her and Lady Avondale walking in the plantation, he thought he would try if talking of Solway would animate her into any thing like conversation with himself. There was nothing, however, to be extracted from Lady Rosamond's answer, except that she wished as courteously as possible to decline the trouble of speaking. He congratulated her on the warm admiration Solway expressed for her; and as she did not like to accept, as if believing them, such exaggerated eulogiums, and had no wish to excite to more, by disclaiming them, she answered somewhat evasively,

“ Was it not time that some one should like me in this country ? ”

“ You are either very proud, or very fastidious, Lady Rosamond. Is not the General wishing himself every day a young man, to be your knight and break a lance in defence of your beauty ? does not his son give up his

favourite game at billiards to see you dance? and is there a single country squire who makes a chance visit, who does not lose his dinner for the pleasure of gazing at you? Are you like Alexander, and must you have another world to conquer?"

"Alexander's conquests, at least, gave him some pleasure in the making, which is more than can be said of mine. I do assure you, I never thought it gratifying to be taken for a painted picture hanging up against a wall, that any one was at liberty to stare at while it amused him, and to forget the moment after."

There was a slight asperity in her manner, which De Lisle understood better than Lady Avondale. Feeling himself deservedly implicated in the observation, he replied with extreme good-humour,

"Will you not consent to pay for your advantages? and why is a handsome woman not to be looked at? It is not perhaps very well-bred, though it *is* very fashionable, to stare at any one; but it is wrong only when you think there is a chance of distressing the person so examined. If the scrutiny to which you are so often doomed either offends

or embarrasses you, why not put an end to it, by showing that it does so? It is a secret you never betray; and I have seen you gazed at by many persons, and looking as unconscious and as absent, and, give me leave to add, as haughtily indifferent, as if you cared not who looked at you, as long as you had not the trouble of looking at them in return."

"I know," said Lady Rosamond, with some remains of bitterness, "it would be prettier and more interesting to blush and fidget and look all ways at once; but I was never ambitious to sit for a picture of 'Delicate embarrassment;' and besides, when a thing annoys me—I mean a trifling thing—I have but one way of meeting it—I think of something else. I know no faculty more useful than that of abstraction, and no danger in indulging it except the unpopularity of the disposition."

"I have been all my life so lectured on not striving to be popular, that I dare not say a word on that head; though I am strongly tempted to repeat to you all the good advice that has been wasted upon me, out of pure economy that nothing should be lost!"

"You think, then, what has failed to convince you might have more effect on me?"

“ No ; I think the chances are, you are still more unpersuadable ; but in truth I was convinced, or pretty nearly so, but too idle to put my convictions into practice.”

“ But perhaps I am idle too ?”

“ Rosamond,” observed Lady Avondale, “ seems to take an extraordinary pleasure in misleading you. I recommend you not to credit her statements implicitly.”

“ Will you give me a clue to guide me through the new labyrinth of a young lady’s mind ?” asked Sir Hubert smilingly.

But Lady Rosamond, who was weary of the subject, said, with rather a forbidding air, “ It would not repay you for the trouble ;” and immediately asked Lady Avondale some other question that changed the conversation, and gave her the wished-for opportunity of relapsing into silence.

Mrs. Parry came out to join her stepdaughter, and as she took her arm, Lady Rosamond foresaw she would fall to the lot of De Lisle. There is nothing more unpleasant than feeling yourself in the way of a person who would rather talk to some one else, and reluctantly engrossing the apparent attention of a man who is not thinking about you. Willing to avoid this

situation, Lady Rosamond said, she had walked enough, and would go in. That De Lisle would leave Lady Avondale, appeared to her next to impossible; and that he would accompany her, entirely so. However, things will turn out contrary to one's best calculation, and they did so in this case.

There was a silence of a few moments, after the lady and her unexpected companion had quitted the rest of their party. De Lisle was silent at first, because he waited for Lady Rosamond to speak; and she said nothing, because she could not make up her mind in what way to allude casually to her plan, in the event of Lady Avondale's marriage. This, however, was a moment not to be lost, for it might never occur again. She therefore stopped at a break in the plantation, that gave a pretty glimpse of the park, which she could very naturally admire. Lady Avondale's interest in the place, her pleasure in returning to it, very readily fastened itself on to this beginning, from whence a discussion easily followed, on the comforts of home. All this was well enough arranged in the speaker's mind, but not quite so well executed. The consciousness that she was overtaking a subject at some distance from her

commencement, made her speak fast, and connect her observations more as you would string beads, than after the usual fashion of blending them into one another.

De Lisle, who had often wondered at her silence, now marvelled at her volubility, with a sort of instinctive sensation that something would follow. He took care, when obliged to speak in his turn, to make use of words of as little meaning as possible, in order not to turn her aside from whatever object she might have in view. He probably succeeded, for she resumed where she had left off; observing, that General Parry seemed so happy to have his daughter back again; she thought it not impossible he might induce her to give up her own house and reside with him. In case of her doing so, or of her marrying again, Lady Rosamond rapidly alluded to her own intentions, and spoke of the pleasure she should have in cultivating the friendship of a sister, of whom she had heard so much, and seen so little. Once fairly over what she had undertaken, she seemed to breathe again, and hardly to be expecting an answer.

De Lisle saw at one glance why all this was said, and a momentary embarrassment at per-

ceiving he was expected to marry Lady Avondale, without having fully made up his mind on the subject, kept him silent. The next thought was something like compassion for Lady Rosamond, who, surrounded by rank and affluence, was nevertheless without a home, and almost without protection. He had never, indeed, thought of her as a possible inmate in his house, but, after all, she was not likely to be in his way, and he was well aware Lady Avondale, who loved her, would not consent to part with her.

After a moment's reflection, he said, "It may seem very impertinent in me, to offer advice to one with whom I am so slightly acquainted; but as the adopted child of my oldest and dearest friend, I may perhaps be allowed to protest against your plan. I imagine you can at all times visit Mrs. Trevannon and your sister; and *that* without abandoning a person to whom you owe at least affection, if not gratitude."

"I am willing to acknowledge that I owe both; but if she returns into the bosom of her own family, where I should necessarily be thought an intruder, and still more, if she marries, she would not want me always at her elbow."

“ She is not at all likely to do the first ; and in case of the second, I don't see on what principle you are to give her up. Should her marriage prove fortunate, why would you seek to cloud it by depriving her of the comfort of your society ?—and should it be otherwise, where would she so naturally turn for consolation as to the child she has reared and loved as her own ?”

“ Simply, because if it were fortunate, she would want nothing else ; and if it were not, it would be an evil for which there is no consolation.”

“ I suspect, while we continue to speak generally, we shall not understand one another. I will therefore candidly acknowledge, that I perceive you say this to *me*, as supposing that I might one day be fortunate enough to be the husband of Ellen. You have somewhat hastily decided for me, that I was to propose to her, which I have not done ; and that she was to accept me, which is possible, but I do not think probable. Supposing facts, however, to keep pace with your imagination, have I not some right to complain at the unflattering insinuation that you could never look upon *my* house as your home ? Would it be easier for you to leave a

woman you love, and grieve one who loves you, than to consent to live beneath my roof? If you were a child who feared to be ruled, I might understand you. But next year you will be of age, rich and independent, and therefore it appears to me you can be actuated but by one of two motives—an unreasonable jealousy of Lady Avondale's affection for you, which is not likely to suffer by any other she may feel of so different a nature—or an antipathy, which *I* of course think quite as unreasonable, for myself. To which of these do you plead guilty?"

"Not to any antipathy to you, certainly," said Lady Rosamond, in a tone of melancholy sweetness that affected De Lisle.

He endeavoured to soothe her by ordinary expressions of regard and benevolence; but his kindness only seemed to have the effect of making her more sad. They were seated on a garden-bench, and Lady Rosamond, leaning her head back against the stem of a tree, closed her eyes as if seeking to prevent her tears from falling. One or two however escaped, and, glittering beneath her long lashes for a moment, rolled quickly off her cheek from the position in which she sat. Sir Hubert gazed on the expression of pain in such youthful and lovely

features with earnest regret, and in a tone of deep feeling said,

“ My poor child, you suffer ! what can I do for you ? ”

The colour that had deserted Lady Rosamond's face, rushed back in deeper glow than usual ; one eloquent look she gave him, but it was but a passing flash ; her eye again drooped, her colour faded, her grateful expressions were no longer thrilling, her manner returned to its accustomed calm self-possession ; and before Sir Hubert left her, he was convinced the emotion she had betrayed was no more than the natural nervousness of a young person whose situation was precarious and unsettled.

But Lady Rosamond could not so deceive herself. Accustomed to weigh her opinions and regulate her feelings, her habits of self-examination at once enabled her to go to the root of what had so painfully affected her in the conversation with De Lisle. The bitter indignation his unceremonious manner of discussing her intentions had roused ; the deep emotion his transient tone of tenderness and sympathy had excited, were effects in appearance so utterly out of proportion to their cause, that she was forced to trace them to a sentiment of which

she had never before known any thing by her own experience, and which was so foreign to her modes of thinking and habits of feeling, that she had never even dreamed of guarding against it.

Lady Rosamond was a noble, high-minded, and generous person ; but Lady Rosamond was not perfect. The sin for which angels fell was her's ; and pride in every shape, and under every possible disguise, was an inmate of her breast. But pride, that had preserved her from many plebeian vices, and spared her many common though ignoble pangs—pride, which she thought gave dignity and consistency to her mind, by teaching her to scorn all that was low and contemptible—pride, in the hour of trial, proved worse than a broken weapon in her hand, for it turned its point against herself. Spoiled from her cradle by a young girl (for Ellen was very young when the charge devolved to her) who knew nothing of education, and did little more than love and caress the child of a friend she truly mourned ; courted as she grew older by dependents ; flattered by her instructors, who were pleased with her diligence and attention, and proud of a promising pupil ; indulged by Lord Avondale, who early deter-

mined to induce her to marry his son: not merely loved and admired, but obeyed by youths, who were often glad to shelter themselves under her influence, Lady Rosamond had ever stood alone; subject to no controul, and acknowledging no superior.

Steadfastly bent on doing what was right, she sometimes carried this tenacity so far, that to every one but herself it was evident that she was also bent on doing her own will. Indulgent to the weak (for the existence of this feeling was a compliment to her own strength), and sometimes to the wicked, when they paid the natural penalty of sin, which even here is sorrow: desirous to alleviate the sufferings of all, she cared not for the opinion of any. By her own she judged herself, and that neither carelessly nor negligently, but she admitted of no other criterion. It was over this being that the full tide of bitterness and self-humiliation was destined to flow; it was she who felt with grief and wonder that the reins were escaping out of her hands, and that the only mortal to whom she had ever bowed her haughty spirit, would not even be flattered by the homage! If she blushed at the mortification of loving one who cared not for her, she was still

more shocked to perceive how many evil ramifications sprang from this dangerous root. She had almost envied Lady Avondale. She had certainly cast her eyes reluctantly over a prospect she believed to be brightening for her. And by whom had she acted this ungrateful part? not by any ordinary and every-day friend, but by one who had received her from a dying mother, watched over her infancy, reared her childhood, rejoiced in her youth, and loved her at every age with all a mother's tenderness, and but little of a mother's authority! Her spirit died within her at these reflections, shame and remorse seized upon her, and she sat immovable, her bloodshot eyes strained with gazing on vacancy, her hands pressed together with convulsive firmness, uttering no sound, shedding no tear, but counting every slow, heavy beat of her heart by the pain each pulse appeared to inflict.

## CHAPTER VI.

“ARE you ready to dress, my Lady?” asked the maid, who had been summoned by the half-hour bell to her apartment, and Lady Rosamond, without replying, arose mechanically.

“Why, your Ladyship sure has never been sitting all this time in your damp boots? ’Tis no wonder you look pale and have swelled eyes!—why they are dripping, my Lady!”

Her Ladyship was at last roused, said something of not having felt that they were wet, and, to make her peace with Bridget, consented to put on a lace cap she held out to her, the soft blue ribands of which harmonized with her delicate complexion.

“If that cap,” said Mrs. Parry, when Lady Rosamond entered the drawing-room, “is only to be becoming, I have nothing to say but to congratulate you on its success; if it means

that you have a cold, I must beg of you not to sit at the door, and get all the draughts of the passage at your back."

"It is entirely to be becoming," replied Lady Rosamond, with a smile.

"Then why do you look so pale, my dear?" asked Lady Avondale anxiously.

"To be interesting, I suppose, Madam."

"But as you don't care, in general, for what is becoming, and never before wished to look interesting," said Lady Avondale, "I should like to know really the truth."

"My cap may, at least, flatter itself with producing a sensation! However, if you will know the whole history, I affronted poor Bridget by forgetting to change my shoes, and so, to oblige her, I put on this cap to guard against a cold of her imagining."

"I thought the cold would come out at last, and you shall have my place at dinner to-day."

Dinner was announced at that moment, and Lady Avondale immediately took Lady Rosamond's accustomed seat, infinitely to the annoyance of the young lady. The place thus vacated was next to Sir Hubert, and upon every possible account was reluctantly taken by Lady Rosamond. She looked, indeed, as

quiet as usual ; but she felt her face glow, and this feeling was not diminished by Mrs. Parry's remarking it. She was afraid she was feverish—recommended her to take no wine, but to have some warm gruel going to bed—talked of taking things in time ; and said, in short, all that an unfortunate person suspected of a cold is fated to hear from good *motherly* women. Lady Rosamond bore it quietly, and, to all appearance, gratefully : and perceiving that it was determined she was to have a cold, ceased even to combat the fact, but her patience was well-nigh exhausted, when De Lisle, who had been watching the variations of her colour, took her hand to feel her pulse. He relinquished it almost immediately, shocked at its rapid and fluttering beat, and firmly convinced before night she would be laid up with some severe disorder.

Impressed with this idea, he devoted himself entirely to her, and unconsciously tried her fortitude to the utmost. She longed to be again neglected, and yet, when that neglect returned, in a great measure, (on finding her still going about, and declaring herself well on the morrow,) she sighed at losing attention, which, though nothing more than the offspring of compassion, it had been soothing to receive. These,

however, were but involuntary impressions and unacknowledged impulses ; the rule of conduct was laid down and rigorously adhered to. Lady Rosamond hoped, by continual occupation, to turn the current of her thoughts, and, if she found it impossible to extinguish her attachment, at least it depended on herself so to soberize and regulate it, that it should interfere with no one's happiness but her own. She believed that certainty would stifle it at once, and she looked impatiently for the moment when it would suit De Lisle to ask for Lady Avondale's hand, and when it would be accorded. She felt how much harm a doubt on the subject did her. He had not yet proposed to her—he was not sure that he would ! What could restrain him ? If he loved her, why did he hesitate ? And if he did not ?—Lady Rosamond could not trust herself with these thoughts.

She turned away from them, and strove to fancy him the happy husband of Ellen. There might be pain, but still there was repose in this view ; the struggle would then be over : his affections fixed, his duty paramount, and she, who at first would be able but just to bear his happiness, would no doubt end by rejoicing in

it, and by uniting in one pure and solid affection two beings for whom she now entertained such different kinds of regard. In spite of the attractions of Lady Avondale's society, Sir Hubert could not stay for ever at General Parry's. Lady Rosamond hailed with pleasure the day of his departure. Her spirits rose at the thought that she should breathe at last, and not have to be perpetually on her guard. She stood on the steps to see him drive off, like the fresh and blooming representation of joyous Spring: but when he *was* gone—when she returned to the apartment she had been used to see him in—beheld his place vacant, or, what was worse, so differently filled, the momentary excitement died away and she sank beneath the blank her own feelings created. She thought every one grown dull or unfeeling; and from this last charge she did not even except Lady Avondale.

Mrs. Parry, who loved Hubert, was one day expatiating on his affection for the Solways, and the many kind and delicate proofs he daily gave them of that affection. Mrs. Parry knew well how much *art* there is in giving, and how difficult it is to do it continually with simplicity and feeling. The pleasing traits she repeated

reflected equal honour on the donor and receivers; and Lady Avondale listened to them with interest and satisfaction, but with little emotion, for she would have wondered had it been otherwise. But to Lady Rosamond, De Lisle and the Solways were not friends on whom she had reason to rely, but new acquaintance, whose good qualities she did but guess at; and her heart beat quicker, her eyes filled with tears, as with a feeling of triumph and exultation she gave her whole attention to Mrs. Parry. As she grew a little calmer, she ventured to look at Lady Avondale, and was petrified at her tranquillity. It is true, thought she, what he said, that she will probably not accept him, for it is evident that she does not love him; and marvellous as it seemed to her, she did not very well know how to regret it. It is fortunate that the imagination of youth easily excited is also easily calmed. While the spirit is fresh and elastic, it can create so many objects of interest.

Lady Rosamond had not seen Sir Hubert for a month, and she was beginning to recover the entire use of her reason, when it was settled that they were all to meet the Savilles at his house. Lady Rosamond shrank in vain from this trial of her self-command; she had nothing left

for it but to follow the crowd, or affect to be ill, and vex Lady Avondale. She could not do the last, so she submitted to the first. She was indeed less alarmed than she would have been some little time before; for though aware the visit would do her no good, yet having had the experience, that her predilection for De Lisle was a kind of intermittent fever, she saw that present agitation might very possibly be followed by future calm. From the moment we understand that no passion is eternal, that we can always check it at first, we begin to see that it may be altogether extinguished in time.

Strong in this conviction, Lady Rosamond drove up to De Lisle's door, and would not indulge herself by one glance at the grounds or dwelling, which she resolutely repeated to herself could be nothing to her. He was himself so taken up in assisting Mrs. Parry out of the carriage and gazing at Lady Avondale, that Lady Rosamond, greeted only with the indispensable words of courtesy and welcome, would have had time to recover from more embarrassment than she really felt. She was presently seized upon by the Miss Savilles, whose admiration of her was boundless, and forcibly expressed by both, according to their very different disposi-

tions. Anne was charmed with her beauty and elegance; she cited her upon all occasions as her criterion of good taste, whether in manners or dress; while Gertrude, infinitely less loud in her praise because she thought her above praise, listened to her as to an oracle, and loved her for a simplicity that hung like a graceful veil over her mental endowments, and tempered, what appeared to her somewhat too dazzling in Lady Avondale.

The grand defect in Lady Rosamond's character, her excessive pride, was converted into a virtue by her youthful worshippers. Anne thought she was so right not to like every body, so honest to show she did not. Gertrude denied she was proud,—it was a dignified forbearance, a reluctance to dwell upon trifles, or associate with triflers. Like many older and more experienced persons, these warm-hearted girls were seduced in some measure by their vanity; they were flattered that so superior a person should show them any attention. They had not learned to compare themselves with others, and, ignorant of their own worth, they looked on all kindness as the offspring of benevolence, not the simple effect of impulse. It is so natural to the human heart to be grateful, that we set out in life by being grateful for every thing!

Lady James was nearly as much fascinated as her daughters, though she had seen too much of life not to wish them to place rather less reliance on the immutable friendship of Lady Rosamond. She did not wish them, when they came out in the world, to fancy themselves mortified and slighted because they were forgotten; and that their fair idol, who was so much their senior, and might be thrown into a different set altogether, would forget them, appeared to her nearly inevitable. It is a hard task to chill the open heart of youth, and unfortunate when it is thought to be necessary. Lady James did not think it ever could be so, and she discouraged unreasonable pretensions, not by withering all confidence in the bosoms of her children, but by the simpler and juster process of explaining to them the relative situations of their acquaintance, and on how few persons after all any one has any claim. The habit of indulgence thus acquired is both more agreeable and safer than the habit of suspicion, which can be the only result of those perpetual warnings with which the voice of experience or of disappointment perpetually trespasses on the ear and wounds the heart of youth. Although Lady Rosamond was grateful for the affection of her

very juvenile friends, and really rejoiced in watching the display of so many fresh and lovely feelings, which they had not yet learned to conceal, she would, for her own pleasure, have preferred cultivating the regard of Lady James. She was withheld by a sort of shyness at making advances to a friend of Sir Hubert's, and also because the first step ought in propriety to have been made by Lady James. Lady Rosamond, like all proud persons, was much attached to *les convenances*, without a due respect for which a person meaning to be very civil is often very impertinent.

The party at De Lisle's was large, and on the whole pleasant, though some dull personages necessarily found their way to the house; because in the country the habit of visiting a place gives a claim to being invited, often much more frequently than the master wishes to see you. It is no wonder that young men afflicted with many such heir-looms should sigh for the liberty of London, where the most insignificant has the privilege of being rude, as it suits his convenience or his caprice.

An unexpected pleasure was prepared for General Parry, who had scarcely reached the drawing-room, before Captain and Mrs. Sey-

mour entered it. Her health, though still precarious, had improved so much, she had determined to make the unusual exertion of leaving home, since by doing so she would see so many of her family united. Mrs. Parry making anxious inquiries after her grandchildren, Augusta said she had brought Sir Hubert's godson with her; and a boisterous child, evidently escaped from its attendant, thrust in a little rosy face at the low open window while she was speaking. The sight of so many strangers checked his spirits and changed his intention, which had been to climb into the room. Every one called out to him, and approached the window, but his backwardness to enter was only increased by their eagerness to attract him; and he was on the point of slackening his hold of the window-frame and taking his departure, when his eye caught a distant figure that he seemed to recognise.

In a tone of doubt and query, he exclaimed, "Lady Rosy!" and she, equally laconic, only answered, "Hubert!"

The soft and quiet accent, however, conveyed so much of tenderness, that De Lisle almost started to hear his own name so pronounced, and did not marvel at the child's making one

bound into the apartment, and another into the arms of his fair friend. Lady Rosamond appeared almost as much pleased at the meeting as the boy, and returned his vehement caresses more gently, indeed, but not less affectionately.

“Did you expect to see me here?” she asked; to which the child unhesitatingly replied in the affirmative.

“Why, who told you?”

“No one told me.”

“Then how could you guess?”

“I did not guess—that is, I was not sure.”

“But why did you think it at all?”

“Because I always think of you, and looked for you the day we came away on that moss-bank—you remember where you cried once.”

“I do remember: and have you kept your promise?”

The child smiled, with a look between archness and hesitation; then, suddenly throwing his arms round her neck, murmured, “Oh yes! I did try sometimes.”

He was much questioned by every one as to the nature of this promise, of which, however, he refused all explanation; and Lady Rosamond, well knowing how a child delights to have his little secret kept, was equally impenetrable.

“ I did not know,” said De Lisle to her at dinner, “ that you had been fond of children.”

“ Neither am I,” she replied ; “ this is a solitary instance of weakness.”

“ Weakness !” re-echoed Anne Saville in a tone of wonder.

Lady Rosamond, in that rational objection to an ostentatious display of sensibility which belongs to all persons of good taste, was sometimes apt to start to the other side. She felt she had done so in this instance, by speaking contemptuously of a love of children, which is natural to almost all benevolent minds. Had she by so doing merely cast an imputation on her own disposition, she would not have uttered a word to weaken the impression ; but she ran the risk of chilling an amiable feeling in the breast of another, and this she justly considered as an evil of great magnitude. Her answer accordingly tended to soothe Anne’s alarm, without keeping up the conversation ; nor, indeed, was the remark attended to by any one but Lady James. She understood the graceful retraction of Lady Rosamond, felt its motive, and was thankful for it.

In the evening, while the Savilles were talking of the alterations they had made, and those they would have liked to make in their house,

Lady Avondale asked if De Lisle had realized any of the numerous and magnificent plans his mother once had projected for his abode.

“You know,” he replied, “I have not my mother’s taste for pulling to pieces. I have made no alteration since the house has been mine, but thrown another room or two into my workshop in the garret, by which I have got a splendid gallery, to which I invite you, if you are not afraid of cobwebs.”

“I think,” she replied, “I will wait for daylight at least to encounter them in; but if you want to do the honours of your poetical retreat, you may take Rosamond, who delights in rummaging through odd places.”

Sir Hubert, who retained most of his early sensitiveness to any thing like a repulse, was so little prepared for one from Ellen, that to cover the embarrassment of the moment he followed her suggestion. Lady Rosamond had been invited to visit many places of the sort, and to admire many collections of curiosities at the tops of houses. She arose therefore with alacrity unmixed with wonder, until she found she was the only person so favoured. She had not heard Lady Avondale’s rejection of the offer made her; and neither understanding

nor liking the being selected by De Lisle on any occasion, however simple, she looked round to summon one of the Miss Savilles to attend her.

It was an unlucky moment for her purpose ; Gertrude was teaching Mrs. Parry a stitch in embroidery ; Anne was playing at chess with Captain Seymour : it was impossible to call either away. De Lisle perfectly understood her intentions, and not caring for her, instead of being mortified at her evident wish to escape any particular attention on his part, he rather admired the instinctive propriety of the feeling, and did all in his power to put her perfectly at her ease. Lady Rosamond was seldom otherwise ; not merely because she carefully avoided any situation that could be commented on, but also because she was aware of the safeguard of her manner and general character, and therefore never made any circumstance awkward by betraying a consciousness of its being so. She could not, however, quite prevent her pulse beating somewhat quicker, as she followed Sir Hubert up-stairs, saying to herself, as she did so, " It is an attention to his dear Ellen, not to me."

The apartment was spacious, but not lofty,

with a shelving ceiling at one end, and various recesses filled with cabinets of stuffed animals. There was a great deal of work going on of various sorts; a considerable litter in the centre of the room, with quantities of materials to make more, piled on one side in an indescribable and heterogeneous mass. As the light fell on the various and disarranged articles of this lumber-room, Lady Rosamond could not restrain a smile.

“I don’t wonder,” said she, “you were obliged to take or make an apartment of this unusual size, if you keep your things in such excellent order. I only wonder you did not build a house on purpose to hold them.”

“It is very bad, I allow,” he replied; “but what can I do? Jane once undertook to put it to rights for me, and she certainly made it very clean, and arranged it very prettily; but then I never knew where any thing was; and the ornamental turning on that ivory cup you see standing unfinished on that shelf I was obliged to leave off, because I always forgot to ask her where she had put some small sharp tools, without which I could not go on.”

“So then you think there is science in all this disorder? I should like to prove it by counting

the things heaped upon this little table. First, a microscope, with all its glasses exposed to the dust; beside it, a volume of the Iliad (I wonder whether Homer ever dreamed of a microscope?) next, remains of some chymical experiment, which, whether or not it failed in its ostensible object, has evidently succeeded in burning a few pages of the book. A dandy pair of pincers, with an ivory rule for the use of the ladies who visit you, no doubt; an unsealed letter (which is flattering to the writer); an open bill (we will hope paid); a map, so folded up that it will not go into its case; some very pretty pieces of petrification, and some dried plants. Is that really all?"

"Why, considering the small dimensions of the table, I think it rather ingenious to have prevailed upon it to hold so much," said De Lisle with his accustomed tranquillity, although inwardly surprised at the light, unceremonious manner in which Lady Rosamond ventured on addressing him. Even Lady De Lisle would have taken some *détour* to hint at the confusion of his apartment; and what his mother would not have done openly, a stranger seemed to think her right.

"It is no wonder," thought he; "she has

been spoiled, even more than I, and is besides a woman, and a very beautiful woman, who of course feels privileged to say what she will ;” and during this fit of musing, his eye followed the graceful figure that flitted round his room, and seemed determined to leave no corner of it unexplored, with some wonder at having brought her there, and some amusement at the interest she appeared to take in her occupation. At this moment her eye was attracted by a beautiful specimen of coral on the top of a kind of press, and she mounted some steps to examine it more nearly. The steps were seldom used, and were crazy and unsteady ; she lost her balance, and saved herself from falling prostrate on the ground, by catching hold of a circular saw, which pierced and tore her fingers.

“ I am well punished for my awkwardness, or my sauciness,” said she, holding up her hand, covered with blood, to De Lisle, who had approached too late to assist her. He urged several remedies to be tried directly, and begged she would allow him to send her the old house-keeper, who was celebrated for understanding the cure of hurts and wounds.

“ You do my lacerated fingers too much

honour," said she, smiling, "to compare them to wounds;" and wrapping her handkerchief over her hand, she begged to know if he had any thing more to show her; remarking she had had enough of doing the honours to herself. He replied she had insinuated herself amongst more lumber, and disturbed more dust, than any one had done for years; but if she was not afraid of creeping up a ladder, and would condescend to be assisted, he would take her on the outside of the house, from the roof of which she might study astronomy as long as it suited her. She made her way accordingly through a sort of trap-door, and found herself on the leads, overlooking the beautiful trees in the park, that seemed sleeping in silvery stillness, while the broad expanse of firmament above was studded with innumerable stars, that sparkled and withdrew as the eye laboured to fix them to one spot."

In such a scene, Lady Rosamond forgot the smarting of her hand, and even the presence of De Lisle, although she held his arm. "How very beautiful!" she said in a low, timid voice, as if she feared to wake the slumbering echoes, and disturb the majestic calm of nature.

Sir Hubert looked at her, and fancied she

grew paler in the shadowy light in which she stood. The organs of men, less feeble than those of women, do not receive impressions so easily; and he read in her low tone, not a mere change of feeling, but an expression of suppressed pain, which he naturally attributed to her recent accident. He accordingly hurried her down-stairs, and before she was aware of it, (being unacquainted with the house,) to the door of the housekeeper's apartment, who was summoned to bathe and bind each particular finger, not one of which had escaped some injury.

When they retired to the drawing-room and related the circumstance, Captain Seymour spared neither party. He abused De Lisle for his carelessness and want of gallantry, and Lady Rosamond for her love of independence and strange taste for ugly rubbish. As both pleaded guilty, there was no pleasure in finding fault any longer; the conversation accordingly fell into other channels, and no one but Lady Avondale remembered with anxiety that Lady Rosamond had been hurt, and might be long recovering it.

## CHAPTER VII.

THE next morning Augusta was desirous of showing her sister the little library they had all contributed to furnish, and in which De Lisle sat when alone. The gentlemen being out, the ladies all followed Mrs. Seymour, and applauded of course what her mother and sister had arranged. There was no alteration since Ellen remembered the room, except in the furniture; but over a recess, where there used to be books, there now hung the many folds of a dark silk curtain. It was withdrawn by Mrs. Parry to show a very beautiful marble bust of Lionel Seymour. There was something cold and repelling in this small inner apartment, contrasted with the light and cheerfulness of the outward one, and none but Lady Rosamond was tempted to penetrate farther. On doing so, her eye soon got accustomed to the "dim religious light"

around her, and she was struck with admiration of the exquisite finishing of a small reclining figure in marble, standing immediately behind the bust of Lionel, and concealed at first by it; she gazed at it, doubtful whether it was sleep or death it meant to represent. A few lines engraved on the pedestal, showed it was the latter, and that it applied to some awful reality; she repeated them, slow and shuddering, for imagination lent them a wild and mournful interest.

“Fermososi al fin il cor che balzo tanto !”\*

“And who *was* this being,” thought she, “whose warm heart has been chilled by the cold grasp of death ?” She continued to examine it with intense and almost painful curiosity, till she was so familiarized with the features as to recognise them again in a small miniature that hung against the wall. But how differently was she there represented, glowing in the rich colouring of life and animation; the light in the full dark eye was so expressive of deep tenderness, it almost partook of sadness, but the just-parted coral lips seemed about to utter joyous sounds.

\* “It has stopped at last that heart that beat so quickly !”

Beauty so exquisite, a countenance so full of existence and of bliss, Lady Rosamond had never before seen. The raven tresses, peculiar complexion and attire, showed she was not English ; and Lady Rosamond concluded from the epitaph that she had been Italian, but no name or date either to the statue or the picture confirmed her surmises.

She looked at the other pictures, but they afforded no farther light. Beneath all the others the name was written ; there was one of Lionel, one of his fair bride Eugénie St. Clair, one of Henry, and a larger oil-painting of Isabella in her monastic garb. She was the only living person whose resemblance clothed those melancholy walls ; but, long dead to the world, she was the link, as it were, in Sir Hubert's mind, between himself and those who had passed through the eternal gates. Her cold severe features were more grating to Lady Rosamond's feelings, than even the contemplation of the individuals who had passed away. *They* had lived out their little span, but in *her* countenance and attitude there was nothing of life.

“ Oh, better be thus ! ” thought she, in the fervour of youthful enthusiasm turning to the

beautiful repose of the marble figure—"better far be thus, and be unconscious at least that we have ceased to feel!"

She was roused from her reveries by the voice of Lady Avondale, who had missed her, and was afraid she might again have hurt herself. She emerged from her gloomy retreat, and listened with all the attention she could to the history of each separate piece of furniture, as it had just been related by Mrs. Parry. Lady Rosamond stood debating in her own mind, whether she should ask Lady Avondale to come and look at the pictures, or whether it would be painful to her, and that she might turn out to be as much in the dark as herself respecting one of them.

Before she had decided either way, Sir Hubert entered. He seemed surprised at finding his own room invaded, but soon smiled at Lady Avondale's apology and explanation. Lady Rosamond, content to be included in it, made no observation herself; and rather supposing she was not desired by Lady Avondale, and positively wished out of the way by De Lisle, she took the first opportunity of walking out of the French window on the lawn, and regaining the general sitting-room. Ellen did not at first

miss her, and when she did, seemed disposed to follow her. She stopped, however, to break off a withered branch of the fuchsia, and observed, as she did so, she had not been aware they were so long-lived.

“It grows stronger every year,” said De Lisle with emphasis. “May I flatter myself, the regard of the fair donor is hardy and vigorous, like the plant she returned to me?”

“Hubert,” said she, lifting her eyes from the plant to him, with an open unembarrassed expression, “my regard had no need of growing stronger, for it was never feeble from our infancy. What it has ever been, it is now; unchanged by time, absence, or a harder foe than all to contend with—your own altered feelings.”

“If they altered, was it without cause? Ellen, you were always reasonable, and have no guess of how madly I once loved you! I am now grown calm, as you ever were; but still the warmest feeling of a chilled and blighted heart is yours. Oh! if you would have taken it in those sunny days of early youth, what misery would you have saved me!”

“Not more,” said Lady Avondale in faltering accents, “than I should have saved myself—but I *could* not. I told you so, and you would

not believe me. Yet you knew me, and might have known I deserved confidence—ay, and that I loved you too, though not indeed quite after your fashion. At least, I tried to think it was an innocent affection, which that would not have been.”

“ Ellen, you talk wildly. What possible guilt could there have been in your returning my love? We were both free?”

“ We were *not* free!” resumed Lady Avondale vehemently; “ *I*, at least, was *not* free!”

“ To whom, then, were you engaged, for Lord Avondale at that time was married?”

“ Yes,” replied Lady Avondale, after a pause of tearful emotion, “ he *was* married—but it was to me! and though I could not prove my marriage—though indeed I did not wish to prove it,—I was still bound by it, and could not break my part of the disgraceful chain. You look amazed; sit down and listen to me: I do not so far insult your honour as to ask you to be silent. I sacrificed myself to Lord Avondale while he lived, and perhaps I owe it to his memory to guard his ashes from execration;—but he was never loved or esteemed by you; and I do him therefore no injury in depicting him as he was, or rather what un-

curbed passions brought him to, for he had many redeeming qualities.

“ You remember the aunt who asked me of my father when my mother was taken hence. She was a good-natured, lively, pleasing person, very friendly and warm-hearted — very munificent in her disposition, and forgiving in her temper. Unfortunately, she was utterly devoid of judgment or steadiness. Her fancies were whimsical, and, while they lasted, were passions. When she took an *engouement* for a person, they never could do wrong ; and she praised and defended their follies as warmly as their virtues. A little sentiment mingled with her affection for me, for she had once loved my father, as she told me with her usual heedlessness, when I was of an age to repeat it to any one.

“ Brought up under such auspices, without any culture being bestowed on my mind beyond the brilliant accomplishments that might show off my person, my extravagance ministered to my vanity, trained up luxuriantly, and my naturally-powerful feelings so ungoverned and inflamed, that I formed no part of this ordinary and rational world: the wonder is, not that I have suffered, but rather that I

have lived, through the thousand pangs my own character procured for me. At fourteen I was very tall, and womanly-looking, which unfortunately induced Lady Susan to take me out, and expect me to do the honours of her house, where there was always a great deal of company.

“ Wild with spirits, confident of admiration, naturally fearless and energetic, I lived in a blaze, and must have been in a constant state of intoxication. I loved my aunt because I was disposed to love every thing, but I had no confidence in her opinions or actions. I loved my brother far more deeply and enthusiastically; for he deserved affection, and fully returned mine. He was proud of my appearance and supposed talents, but he saw the many disadvantages that would result to me from Lady Susan’s mismanagement. Men, however, seldom understand much of female education, or attribute any important consequence to it. He saw only that all the defects of youth were encouraged in me, and his ardent wish was, that I should marry early, and be taken from the injudicious controul, or rather the no-controul, of my aunt. He did not consider that if my marriage was intended to cor-

rect the errors of my education, I must be married to some one able and willing to take some pains with me:—no; he thought the mere fact of changing my name would work wonders—that there was some magic in the ceremony that would transform a self-willed, vain, giddy girl into a sober and respectable matron.

“ He looked anxiously round among my admirers, and was charmed to see that his own favourite companion was not the least in earnest of the party. It was true, Avondale was a younger son, with little beyond his profession to look to; but he had good connexions, good abilities, and every thing, in short, in favour of his rising in the world, and winning the hand of a greater heiress than I was expected to be. My brother overlooked the possible impediment of Lady Susan’s thinking very differently. Youth is always sanguine, and has never much doubt of being able to convince others of what it is fully persuaded itself. He encouraged Avondale’s timid advances, and obliged me to behave with rather less flightiness than I was wont on such occasions.

“ This might have been a moment for reflection in a better regulated mind: in mine it was

only one of excitement; I had a confused idea that something serious might come of attentions sanctioned by my brother; but though I did not like to dwell upon it, I was tolerably aware that I loved Avondale; therefore I did not shrink from what I imagined might be the result. I was too light-hearted to anticipate grief, too eager to fill every passing moment with mirth and amusement, to find any leisure for doubts and anxieties. I was even too gay to be happy, for I did not pause in my wild career to recount my blessings, and admire the cloudless sun of prosperity that seemed to shine only for me.

“ When my brother saw that our mutual affection hardly admitted of increase, he offered to speak to Lady Susan. Avondale eagerly caught at the proposal; but I was more cowardly. I did not indeed think that my aunt, who was the slave of my whims, could seriously oppose me in any thing; still, I knew the more highly she prized me, the more ambitious she was for me—the more determined that I should make a brilliant match. As William’s friend, I could now see Avondale continually. Should any doubt seize Lady Susan, she might fairly say I was too young to marry (for I was but

just turned fifteen), and there would be an end of the constant and familiar intercourse I now enjoyed with my lover. However, his arguments and those of my brother prevailed, and the application was made: its result outdid my worst fears. Lady Susan was furious—thought Avondale very conceited, William very impertinent; and as for me, she declared I was bewitched. She accused them both of turning a silly child's head before she could know her own mind, or could judge of the importance of the step they wanted her to take; adding, with great *naïveté*, that there was no saying whom she might have been married to, if she had been given her way at my age.

“William, in recounting this conversation to me, observed with considerable asperity, that for his part he thought a child of fifteen better than a child of fifty, since in one case there is a chance of improvement. He then bade me be of good courage, that he would not give the matter up, and would apply to my father, who, after all, was the only person who had any legitimate controul over me. He did so; and I received a kind paternal letter from home, entering warmly into my feelings, but at the same time representing that I owed some duty and

gratitude to Lady Susan, and ought not, at my age, to set my opinion, right or wrong, against her's. That, indeed, it would avail nothing, as Avondale could not keep a wife on his pay; and therefore we must depend on some settlement from my aunt, as he (General Parry) could not make one on me himself without injury to his other children, none of whom were in the way to be so greatly provided for as myself. He concluded by recommending a little patience; and, alluding to the influence he understood I possessed over my aunt, expressed a hope that in time she would see with my eyes.

“I was soothed by the kind and rational tone of this letter, but I could not conceal from myself that my father would not interfere in my behalf. Indeed, I had hardly expected it. I knew but little of him: I thought of him, in the bosom of a new family, content to let William and me get on in the world by the help of my mother's relations. Lady Susan, then, was my only hope; and I tried to work on her facile mind in all ways I could think of. Unused to opposition, I had difficulty in mastering my irritation, especially when she sought to put me off with reasons not only absurd in them-

selves, but often contradictory. I was generally told that my mother's marriage was bad enough, and that the mania need not continue in the family. There might be some excuse for Lady Ellen, who was unhappy at home,—there could be none for me, who had every thing I wished. To me it seemed there was but one thing that I wished, and that was withheld from me. I ventured to hint Lady Susan had shared her sister's predilection for my father.

“ ‘Yes,’ said she quickly; ‘but I did not marry him.’

“ That she had never had it in her power I well knew, but it would have been idle to have told her so. Lady Susan's great and, as she declared, unfailing remedy for love, was dissipation, and this she administered unsparingly, and certainly without opposition on my part. I had still very high versatile spirits, though they were at times checked and clouded. I still loved gaiety for its own sake, and besides, in public I was sure to meet Avondale. Lady Susan, satisfied that he neither would nor could marry me without a portion from her, was content to prove her determination not to give one, by forbidding him her house. Any where else I was at full liberty to see and converse with

him as much as I would. Besides, she could not break through the habits of independence she had herself given me, and I am persuaded I might have received him at home without any one informing her of it.

“ However, as my plan was to conciliate, I would not transgress so far as to disobey her positive orders ; and besides, I hated concealments of all sorts, though it has been my fate so seldom to appear what I am. My brother, who had adopted my father’s idea, that time and patience would bring every thing smooth, did not give up his plan ; so that, favoured by him and my own weakness, Avondale had nothing to complain of. I got accustomed to my new situation, recovered my violent spirits, and looked as confidently to the future as if I could have controlled it. We were sporting and trifling on the very brink of misery. The regiment in which were William and Avondale was ordered to Holland. Since I had appeared on the stage of life, a British soldier’s existence had been the gayest and the safest thing imaginable. The Guards especially were mere fine young men of fashion, who made a show on gala days, and lounged up and down St. James’s Street. A naval officer now and then got an

unlucky wound, but such vulgar accidents were little likely to befall our well-dressed, well-scented military men.

“ I knew that in the days of Queen Anne we had purchased military glory at a high rate of blood and treasure. I had heard my father talk of the disastrous campaigns in America ; but it seemed to me that this was all over ; that our insular situation required nothing but ships to guard us, and that, in short, we might leave it to our Continental friends or foes to cut their neighbours’ throats as best suited them. I was so bewildered and terrified at losing the only beings I really loved, and knowing they would be engaged in scenes of continual danger, that I had hardly the power to connect two ideas together. William went to see his father, and repenting now of the encouragement he had given Avondale, gravely advised me not to see him during his absence, except when I could not help it and in company. I made no reply, for I thought the request much too unreasonable to be answered even. In a constant state of feverish agitation, I had no repose but in the presence of my lover. I could only think him safe when I saw him ; I could only hope his return when his

voice assured me of it. Hubert, you say I was always calm. Oh! had you seen me then!

“It was in these stolen interviews Avondale urged a private marriage. I revolted at it, not from any prudent thought of the future, but merely from my dislike and contempt of clandestine measures.

“‘Ellen,’ said he, ‘is not my fate hard enough to bear?—will you make it harder? You are very young, and in my absence you may perhaps have but one way of escaping engagements that will be pressed on you by those who have some right to do so, and that way will be acknowledging a previous union. If I return, how joyful and confident will be my return! If I fall, will you not reproach yourself with having denied my last request?’

“These arguments appeared to me unanswerable, and at the early age of sixteen I stood alone before the altar of God to bind myself by irrevocable vows. Some military friend of Avondale’s, with whom I was unacquainted, gave me away. The chaplain of the regiment read the ceremony in our little parish church, of which the clerk easily procured the key, and, being a pensioner of mine, was a safe person. No one else was present, except

an old grey-headed dependent, brought up in the family, and so much attached to my mother, that he had assisted her in her flight with my father, and joined her shortly afterwards. He now lived with his aged partner in an ornamental building in the grounds, which was considered as my property, and where I had a room constructed with a peculiar roof, to increase the effect of organ music. I was very dear to the old man, who still considered me as a child. He laid his hand on my head when the service was over, and said earnestly,

“ ‘ May God bless you ! my beautiful young lady, and make you as happy as your angel mother ! ’

“ The blessing fell not on me, for I had not prayed for one myself ; yet for ten days I thought myself most happy. I forgot the separation that hung over my head, or remembered it but as the sudden pang inflicted by an iron belt worn in penance, which subsides before we can complain of it. My brother returned, and heard of our union in silent sadness. He thought it ungenerous of Avondale to have taken advantage of my unbounded tenderness in urging so rash a step, and even hinted we had better confess our situation at once to Lady

Susan. This I opposed. I felt confident I should not be forgiven, and I would not harass Avondale, on the eve of his departure, by risking the having to apply to him for a home; besides, I assured William, which was true, that I was much happier than I had ever been before, in the certainty of belonging to the only being I had ever felt the smallest preference for, and the confidence I should now feel in opposing any other engagement that might be offered me.

“Had Avondale only been my lover, I might be told it was my duty to give him up; I might be persuaded he had ceased to love me; but he was my husband; and in those days that little word spoke of present happiness and future hope! They left me—but I will not talk of that period. I cannot think of it even now:—One—the noblest, best, returned not: the other yet lived to mingle his tears with mine; but so changed—so feeble! Alas! changed in heart too; but that I knew not then. I could not indeed have supported the knowledge. Avondale returned to his father’s house to be nursed—I could not nurse him. I could not be near him; and yet I was his wife, and I had now nothing left to love but him!

“I implored him to acknowledge our union, and trust to Providence and the chance of Lady Susan relenting. He told me it would be unpardonable selfishness on his part to withdraw me from the brilliant circle in which I moved, in order to make a nurse and domestic drudge of me. That his health was broken, indeed sufficiently to prevent his being employed actively again, so that half-pay was our sole future prospect, but that he was not ill enough to be in any danger, and therefore I must make myself easy. I was excessively hurt at the coldness with which all this was said, but still persisted in the belief that it was all for my supposed good, and that he concealed his own feelings out of a foolish notion of generosity.

“I looked round for some one to advise me and feel for me—but there was none: and burying my griefs in my own breast, I truly felt desolate and abandoned. The death of Avondale’s elder brother, which just then took place, was likely to change my situation. He was now the heir, and his father would probably make him a handsomer allowance, and could not prevent his inheriting eventually entailed family estates. He came to town on business, immediately after the melancholy event, and appeared to

me much agitated and depressed in consequence. I knew too well how a brother's loss is felt, not to sympathize truly with him; yet I wondered that my tenderness had not as much power to soothe his grief as his ever had to assuage mine. He told me one day abruptly, he had resolved on speaking once more to Lady Susan. 'It was needless,' he remarked, 'to tell her we were already married, (especially as such a marriage, unduly solemnized, unregistered, and the witnesses to which were dead, could so easily be broken if my family wished it,) but that he was now a better match, in a worldly view, than he had been when she treated his proposal with contempt, and besides,' he added with some hesitation, 'she may not look so high for you now.'

" 'I hope not,' I replied with simplicity; 'but I don't see why we should expect it. Though you have been used to see me so long in the world, you know I am still very young, and have not to complain of wanting admirers.'

" 'Oh, I know!' said he impatiently, 'you might marry better any day; but it may not be for long, young and lovely as you are.'

" 'Well,' said I smiling, 'that would be of

no consequence, since I *am* married; but still I am curious to know your reason.'

" 'Have you never remarked,' asked he, answering my question by another, 'a Mr. Donavan paying your aunt rather more attention than she receives from her other guests?'

" 'I have certainly seen such a man, and have thought him forward and underbred. It was natural for Lady Susan to have more patience with him, because she knew all his family in Ireland in her youth, and I believe they are all vastly good people.'

" 'Vastly good people,' said Avondale with a dubious smile, 'sometimes look to the main chance as much as others. This fellow is young, lively, not ill-looking—if it suits him to sell himself to an old cat for her money-bags, Lady Susan's understanding will nor save her, because no such thing exists. I have no hope but in her pride.'

" I opened my eyes wide during this speech, and when I had quite understood its drift, could not refrain from a violent and childish burst of laughter. Avondale was seriously displeased."

“ ‘ In God’s name ! Ellen,’ cried he, ‘ are you mad ? to take pleasure in an event that will disgrace your aunt and beggar us !’

“ I begged pardon for having seen the subject only under its ludicrous aspect, and gave my decided opinion that the thing was impossible.

“ ‘ Well, we will see,’ added he : ‘ I hope you are right ; but you and I, methinks, have no right to doubt foolish marriages.’

“ This time Avondale had not my mirth to complain of, but he betrayed quite as much petulance at my tears. He left me to speak to Lady Susan, in whose house he had been again an admitted visitor since his return to England. I remained at that cottage in the grounds, in which I had been in the habit of receiving Avondale ; I watched his receding figure from the latticed casement beside which we had so often sat and talked of love and happiness. Those days were past, those sentiments were over—my heart was wrung. It was no new idea that ours had been a foolish match ; but that I should hear it from his lips, who had suffered nothing as yet from its folly ;—I laid my head on the window-frame and wept in bitter, uncontrolled anguish. I was startled at last by a low plain-

tive sound; I looked up, and beheld standing at some distance the venerable inmate of the cottage, the sole surviving witness of my ill-starred union; he rested his trembling hands on his staff, in an attitude of hopeless dejection, while big tears rolled over his furrowed cheeks. I felt he was weeping for me, and my grief redoubled like that of a child who is pitied. I averted my head, and waved my hand in token that I wished for solitude, for there are some proud spirits who cannot brook a witness of their agony.

“The old man neither receded nor advanced, but in a tremulous voice said, ‘Your sainted mother was very dear to me; she was reared beneath my roof, and shared the same milk with my son. It was God’s will to deprive me of both, and I mourned for them; but not as I mourn for you, poor young thing! They are in bliss: they have fought the good fight; but you have been cast into the world a pearl before swine, and have been devoured by its foolish vanities. You have given your money for what is not meat, and your labour for what satisfieth not. Yet droop not, as though none cared for thee; will not God care for his own?’

“ In the season of affliction, cowardice makes us all religious. I had often listened to this old man’s *reveries*, glad that he had any source of enjoyment, but smiling a little at what I thought his visions. *Now*, I would have been thankful for half his confidence in them. The comfort he offered was high and holy ; but was I worthy to receive it ? I expressed my doubts, because my heart was just then too full to conceal any thing.

“ ‘ Now God be thanked ! ’ exclaimed the old man triumphantly, ‘ for it is his doing ! The pride of genius is forgotten, and the spirit that was never ruled bends humbly to its Creator ! What is *our* worth, and who is worthy in His sight ? If we offend an earthly master, it may be he will not pardon ; but God sees not as man sees. When the father forgave his returning child, he waited not for solicitation, but from afar he beheld him, and went out to meet him. Does not God go out to meet us every day ? ’

“ The words of the old man were so impressive, his manner so earnest, that to me he appeared as the special messenger of Heaven. My tears still flowed, but without violence or bitterness. Suddenly, I remembered the old

man might think my distress arose from some unkindness from my husband; and, anxious to exculpate him, I mentioned his present errand to Lady Susan.

“ ‘ And why does he not tell the truth ? ’ he exclaimed abruptly : ‘ but pardon me, Lady, I understand not these courtly ways, and they may be honester than they look. ’ ”

“ I smiled at the doubt which I did not share, and presently after Avondale returned. He coloured, and looked annoyed at seeing who was with me : his countenance stiffened and relaxed, as if undecided whether to be very gracious or very haughty. The object of his embarrassment looked earnestly at him, then, slightly bending his head, apologized for his intrusion, saying, he feared I had been ill. He left the room immediately.

“ ‘ You have not been ill though, Ellen ? ’ asked my husband rather anxiously ; and I replied quickly, that I had not ; then, after a pause, said, ‘ I have no cause, have I, Avondale ? ’ ”

“ He seemed affected by my question, came up to where I stood, and, perceiving the traces of tears on my cheek, kissed me tenderly, and called me by all the fond names I had hardly

heard since his return to England. I thought I had wronged him,—how gladly I thought it! I was willing to accuse myself in every way, so that I could again enjoy the dear illusion of being beloved. The dinner brought us back, I may say, from fairy land, for all my bliss was visionary.

“ ‘ Good Heavens! my Ellen,’ said Avondale, ‘ how I forget myself with you! I should have been in town—nay, half-way to my father’s, by this. I have spoken to Lady Susan: be not distressed, my love: I forced her to confess the folly she meditates; in fact, the marriage settlements are drawn up, and her heiress, as you have so long been called, has 5000*l.* settled on her. She says, if you choose to take me, she will not change that arrangement; but will never see you more, or add to your fortune. *That*, indeed, her husband will not suffer her to do, I am persuaded, under any circumstance: but let that pass. I must now see what my father will give me; for as to your living on the interest of 5000*l.* it is ridiculous, with your expensive habits, and very delightful, but very useless acquirements.”

“ ‘ My dearest Avondale,’ said I, ‘ only have

patience with me: I will learn to be useful, and am not afraid of regretting luxury.'

“ ‘ My dear child,’ said he impatiently, ‘ you know nothing about it: you don’t know what it is to do without what you have always been used to. I ought to have remembered that; but I never thought it would come to this! I have ruined all your prospects; for, as Lady Susan truly says, if you chose among your admirers blindfold, it would be wiser than taking me!’

“ ‘ But not happier!’ said I timidly.

“ ‘ Happier!’ he repeated in a mournful accent; then, as if not trusting himself to continue, he exclaimed, ‘ I must positively be off—God bless you! my dearest Ellen,’ and with one hurried embrace he left me.

“ I went to the window, and, as I used to do in former days, waved my handkerchief to him. He looked up, and, instead of returning my signal, retraced his steps, and was at my side in a moment.

“ ‘ My Ellen!’ said he, ‘ promise me one thing: whatever you hear—whatever you see, do not believe I can cease to love you.’

“ I threw myself into his arms, and expressed

a confidence in his affection that must have been even more painful for him to remember afterwards than for me.

“ There is no use in dwelling for ever on this stormy period of my life. Avondale’s father had other plans for him: he thought marrying an extravagant fine lady, with only 5000*l.* an act of madness—in short, he would settle nothing on us. Some bitter letters passed between him and Lady Susan. Avondale, in the meanwhile, flirted (I really believe from habit merely) with the young lady whom his father wished him to marry. Lord Avondale took advantage of this folly, and proposed for her in his son’s name. She accepted him, and he had to choose between a new fancy with a fine fortune; on the other hand, a woman he was tired of, who had next to none. He chose the former, writing me a singular letter, in which he endeavoured to prove, that it was his duty to oblige his father; that our union could not stand in law; and not having been blessed with children, there was no reason why we should not think ourselves mutually free. Such a letter could not be answered; and in the first moment of indignation I really thought I was glad to have all

tie to such a being dissolved. As, however, I could not think, in spite of his sophistry, that he had any right to marry another, I was uneasy in my conscience at suffering such an union to take place. I told my whole history to Lady Merrion, who was then dying, and who had asked me to spend a little time with her by the sea. Her own heart was breaking at her husband's conduct, and, tremblingly alive to any sorrow at all akin to her own, she felt most truly for me.

“ She was acquainted with Avondale's future bride. She wrote to her as from herself, warning her not to accept a married man, and promising farther details if she wished for them. She did *not* wish for them, and I thought it needless to make any farther effort to save a woman who would not be saved. Lady Merrion died soon after, and left me the little Rosamond—sweet, unconscious soother of many an hour of sorrow ! I had trials of every sort to endure, for my aunt was now the wife of Mr. Donavan ; and after having ruled as mistress at home, I became worse than a cypher, for I was hated and feared by its present master. Lady Susan, though shamefully used by her husband, continued to idolize him, and was so thorough-

ly under his influence, and moved as a puppet by his will, that I could not separate her in my mind from him.

“ You will wonder that I bore all this without applying to my father, who would probably have received me under his own roof, had he guessed the discomfort of my existence at my aunt’s—but after fever comes debility. My heart was chilled as well as wounded. I had no belief that any one could care for me—had not Avondale ceased to do so? I was unacquainted with Mrs. Parry and her children. I thought it would be harder to feel an intruder in my own father’s house than in the home usurped by a stranger. Besides, there was a lethargy on my faculties that bounded my view to the passing hour: if that could be got over well, I was content; and if not, I soon forgot it. Our once hospitable mansion had become as gloomy as a convent; a few discontented figures crept slowly through the empty apartments of the varied circle my aunt had formerly collected around—nearly all had dispersed together like a flight of swallows; the few remaining stragglers were persons of a certain age, who will always be constant to a card-table, in whatever house it stands. Mr. Donovan preferred a tavern dinner

with his own associates, to one at his own house with Lady Susan. By degrees, too, he reduced the establishment, wanting the money for other things. He sold one morning nearly all the horses, and my saddle-horse among the number. I knew nothing of it until I ordered it to the door for my daily ride. All these were small vexations not worth fretting about, yet I remember the time when they would not have been tamely borne.

“I still went into public with one friend or another, (for I had many intimate though no confidential acquaintance,) and was glad of the change. Any thing that put away the time, and brought me sooner to the hour of repose, was a kind of victory in my eyes. My former pursuits were altogether changed. I used to like drawing; but since William's death, who had been my principal instructor, I had not had courage to take up my pencil. Music I had passionately loved—but I loved it too well; and it was by slow degrees only that I could bring myself to bear, not merely airs associated with the past, but any sound that was either sad or tender. Poetry, that I once recited with such delight, I carefully avoided: all emotion was painful to me, and I found relief only in the

driest, dullest reading, or in the mechanical employment of making clothes for the poor. Time went on, and Lady Susan, who, left to herself, still fancied herself much attached to me, determined on giving an entertainment on my coming of age. Mr. Donovan, being by chance in a good humour, did not oppose it; and to oblige my aunt I exerted myself to pay attention to the guests and to my own attire. Fine feathers, they say, make fine birds. Mr. Donovan who saw me continually in a simple morning-dress, had never, I believe, looked at me: he beheld me radiant in jewels and finery, and persuaded himself I was lovely.

“From that fatal evening he appeared to change his riotous mode of living—was a great deal more at home, and, instead of covertly thwarting me in every thing, now seemed only desirous to guess my wishes in order to fulfil them. I had so thorough a knowledge of his character, and so great a contempt for him, that I could not attribute this change to any benevolent or respectable motive: however, I did my best to take no notice of it; and as he had always been rather in awe of me, I might have kept him within the line of propriety, but for an unlucky accident. The good old man of the

cottage died, and his wife followed him in a few weeks: unfortunately her ideas wandered for some days previous to her dissolution; and Mr. Donavan, who made a great merit with me of attending to the aged couple, heard her make allusions to Avondale, all of which indeed he did not understand: but there were materials for the imagination to work upon, and his not being a refined one, he stopped at once at the idea of my having carried on a most shameless intercourse with my lover, in that cottage, to which I had once been so attached, and now never visited, but when its inmates were dying.

“ He thought now that I was in his power, and he told me so. This was an insult beyond even my habits of endurance, and I immediately applied to my father to receive me. He came accordingly, but Lady Susan was then very ill: I thought it would be ungrateful to abandon her to servants. Mr. Donavan promised never again to annoy me; and as I was willing to avoid giving the real reason to my father for having wished to leave the house, he readily agreed to my deferring my intention to a more convenient opportunity. Lady Susan had a long and lingering illness: she recovered in some measure, but her intellects were enfeebled,

and her temper soured. She was miserable at her husband's neglect, and jealous of every one he spoke to. She ended by becoming jealous of me; and then there could be no longer a reason for my remaining with her.

“ I returned to the home I had quitted fourteen years before. I left it in tears—but they were the tears of childhood, forgotten as soon as shed. I returned to it calm, but with the iron hand of grief on my heart. It was turning over a new page in my life, and I reflected much on what conduct I should pursue. Several rather advantageous offers had been made me just previous to Lady Susan's illness. I reflected, that should the same thing occur again in my new home, my father would naturally press my acceptance of them, and his daughters would be anxious to have an elder sister married out of the way. To avoid every thing of the kind, I announced at once, that my health being feeble, and being tired out with gaiety, I begged to be included in none of Mrs. Parry's plans for amusement, but to be allowed to be as much alone, and as little attended to, as possible.

“ My father thought I was in bad spirits, and must be humoured, while all was strange

to me ; that I would change in time ;—and then he got used to my way, and forgot that I had not changed. Mrs. Parry, who is the most benevolent woman possible, would gladly have seen me mix more, and let myself be known, as she termed it. As I was not a methodist, she could not account for my solitary habits, and the pains I took not to attract attention. Augusta, who was a very lovely, but a very young girl, was getting rather above her hand, and she would gladly have seen me throw her gently in the background. But Augusta, though sweet-tempered and affectionate, was too much spoiled to be mended by me, who had no legitimate authority over her, and I was unwilling to purchase her ill-will without a chance of doing her good. I need not speak more of this period, for you were seldom out of my father's house, and marvelled at my retired manners as much as my stepmother could do.

“ You remember, too, Avondale's unexpected and unwelcome visit, but you do not know that he it was who guarded me against your growing regard.”

“ Pardon me,” interrupted De Lisle, “ I did by chance hear that conversation, and was much bewildered by it.”

“ And guessed nothing like the truth?”

“ How could I? Not merely honour but common honesty would have forbidden such a surmise; besides, you know, I loved you myself, and could not therefore readily comprehend any one ceasing to love you. But tell me, rather, why you did not then confide to me the whole truth? It could have done you no more harm, and it would have done me good.”

“ So you think now, because it is long ago, and you have forgotten that passion is blind, and does not listen to reason. In the first place, I was reluctant to disgrace Avondale, while he could be injured by it; and I was also fearful of your resentment: you might have thought it very noble to avenge me. No, I had paid too dearly for my first imprudence not to have been taught caution; and it was, after all, better for you to suppose me a creature that nothing could touch, and whose calm feelings no emotion could ruffle, than one who had rushed into the turmoil of passions and been blasted by their might. You would have said, she has loved once, and suffered for it; she may love again, and be rewarded. I know what are the wild visions of youth: you would have forgotten that one of two things was certain; either

I was Avondale's wife, and could not therefore be yours ; or I had been his mistress, and ought therefore never to be your wife."

"It may be so," said De Lisle after a pause, "and perhaps I am only willing to make you and destiny bear the burden of my evil deeds. Once, Ellen, I could have offered you a heart as pure as it was warm. I did offer it, and was rejected. It is altered now, and not, I fear, improved ; it is probable you will again reject it."

"I will do just as you please," replied Lady Avondale kindly ; "but we are now, you know, quiet people and friends, not young lovers, so there is time enough to discuss rationally what our relative situation is, and how far we should improve by the change. I need not say, that I was not happy in my *acknowledged* married state ; and yet it was not Avondale's fault ; at least it was the result only of his former fault. If he could have forgotten how passionately I had once loved him, he would have been satisfied with attention to his comfort, and cheerful duty. He was not ; and yet it was himself whom he reproached, and not me. I loved his boys, and he was glad of it, yet at times could not bear to see that I loved them for themselves

more than as his children. His attachment for me had not been strong enough to induce him to encounter opposition and penury for my sake, and his conscience forbade his enjoying luxury without me. For a man of general good feelings to commit a base action, is the worst calculation imaginable: he is sure to suffer for it, and cannot even profit by it for the moment. Whose outside show of prosperity was fairer than Avondale's? Poor man! I do not believe he had an hour's real happiness after he embarked for Holland.

“ Having found all my efforts to make him even comfortable abortive, you will not wonder that I should be doubtful of my powers in that way. It is true, that our union would be different, inasmuch as we have nothing with which to reproach one another; but I think it would also be useless. Where a situation is uncomfortable and aimless, there is a temptation to change, even without any of those ardent feelings that paint the future in very gay colours; but that is not our case. We are surrounded by comforts, and have the means of being extensively useful. We are old friends, and have pleasure in each other's society; nothing so easy as to enjoy it often, without having re-

course to ties that may be found irksome—that, I honestly believe, always *are* irksome, unless formed in very early youth from the impulse of lively attachment. There is yet another thing to consider. You certainly are at full liberty to marry or not, as you like; yet, if you decide on the former, do you not owe it to your mother to make a choice not *very* unpleasing to her? I am several years your senior, which was nothing when first you proposed to me, but is beginning to show now. Lady De Lisle would be most happy to see you married, but most disappointed if you had not a son. You had better, therefore, marry some young girl, and I will come and educate all your children, if you like.”

“ You may laugh at me as much as you like, my dear Ellen, but I really cannot sacrifice myself to this unborn family of mine. I have by no means a general vocation for matrimony; and if I do not marry you, I shall assuredly remain single.”

“ If I were your mother, I should say, so much the worse; as I am not, I know not what to say, except that you must judge for yourself. You will not be hurried in your decisions in this case; for I would not marry the King of

England till Rosamond is of age. Therefore, till then, we need not resume the subject; and I believe the less we think of it, the more comfortable we shall be."

"Pray answer for yourself," said De Lisle, with a faint smile; and thus was this long and confidential conversation concluded.

## CHAPTER VIII.

LADY ROSAMOND, meantime, had counted the minutes till they grew to hours, in restless anxiety to know what might be the result of so lengthened a discussion. The rest of the party were assembled in the dining-room at luncheon, when Lady Avondale and De Lisle joined them. Lady Rosamond looked eagerly from one to the other: she saw Lady Avondale had shed tears, but now looked serene as usual, neither more cheerful nor less so than was her custom. Sir Hubert's countenance was overcast, yet more expressive of reflection than disappointment. She could make nothing out from either; for she thought, had they decided any thing, they would have looked more pleased or more sad. All her doubts vanished, as De Lisle, taking a vacant seat beside her, asked what she would have, with an accent of more

affection than he had before addressed her in, and omitting, for the first time, her title in speaking to her. This sudden confirmation of her worst fears was more than her spirits were equal to. She tried to answer; she held firmly by the table, determining not to give way; but it would not do, and she sank back in her chair perfectly insensible.

Every one was in alarm, Lady Avondale in the greatest distress, and little Hubert Seymour roaring with all his might. De Lisle, rather impatient at a confusion that made it impossible to do any thing effectual for Lady Rosamond's recovery, took her up in his arms, and carried her out upon the lawn. He laid her on a sort of wheeling bench with cushions on it; and the fresh air, as he supposed, did more for her than all the salts and essences. When she opened her eyes, and saw every one standing round her, and Sir Hubert supporting her, she closed them again, and could have wished the earth to open and conceal her from so many eyes. With more perfect recollection, however, returned the consciousness, that no one possessed the key to her feelings, and that it would be her own fault if any one guessed them. She did not, therefore, betray herself

by seeking any improbable cause for her indisposition, but quietly observed she was quite well in the air. At this moment De Lisle's curricule drove to the door. He was obliged to go a few miles on business, and offered to drive her, promising that, as it was entirely for her health, he would not expect her to be agreeable. Lady Rosamond naturally shrank from this arrangement; but Lady Avondale and her sister so earnestly advised it, that, fearing her wish to avoid De Lisle should be suspected, she yielded to the well-meant but most distressing importunity of her friends.

She had luckily an excuse for silence, and she availed herself of it to the uttermost. Yet it was not in human nature to meet with coldness the quiet but continual attention of which she was naturally the object; and her gentle manner, and mild look of acknowledgment, were so pleasing to her companion, that he began to think he must be a very cold-hearted person not to like her better; and actually formed the resolution to get acquainted with her, which he had not hitherto thought necessary. This approach to intimacy was accounted for by Lady Rosamond, by supposing him

positively engaged to Lady Avondale. She longed to ask her; but when she had begun a conversation which was to lead to it, she had never courage to come to the point; and Lady Avondale herself, neither by look nor manner, hinted at it. A casual observer would have thought Sir Hubert more likely to marry Lady Rosamond; for the friendship of a man for a young and lovely woman always looks like gallantry. She herself, indeed, knew perfectly what to think of it, and tried to school her heart into bearing this outward change; for, in fact, it was little more, De Lisle being more willing to like her, than altogether successful in it. The more he saw of her and conversed with her, the more convinced he was that she was a superior person; but not having any clue to the variableness of her manner towards himself, he felt doubtful of her temper, and uncertain of his footing in her regard.

He could not bear caprice or pettishness; and he sometimes thought he detected a little of both in Ellen's adopted daughter. Their visit, however, passed over without any thing remarkable; and Lady Rosamond was comforted to see she was rather supposed to be prejudiced

against their host, than in his favour. On the day of their departure, while every one was interchanging farewells, and naming different periods when they were to meet again, De Lisle's godchild insisted on ingrossing all "Lady Rosy's" attention. She stooped down to kiss him, bestowing liberally those caressing epithets that are given to children. The child, indeed, had often heard them with indifference from others, but he seemed now delighted, whether from really liking her better than any one else, or from feeling the tone of sincerity in which she spoke. It seemed a kind of relief to a heart full of concealed tenderness to return the endearments of a child. This was one of the inconsistencies that puzzled De Lisle. He contemplated her for a moment in silence, and then said,

"That boy monopolizes you entirely; I am afraid he is the only Hubert you care at all for."

This was spoken jestingly, and Lady Rosamond tried to answer in the same tone, but her voice trembled, and, conscious that it did, she blushed.

"Don't look so uncomfortable, my little sen-

sitive plant," said De Lisle, smiling; "I mean you to be very fond of me one of these days, but you shall take your own time about it."

Lady Rosamond could not look at him without betraying that her eyes were full of tears: she averted her head, and held out her hand at the same moment. In the next she had driven off. "Strange girl!" thought Sir Hubert, "I wonder what is running in that pretty little head of her's?" and the next moment he forgot that he ever wondered about her, so slight was the impression she made upon him.

It was far otherwise with her. "Never," said she inwardly, "can I go through this, all day and every day. When he is at a distance, I think myself safe; when I meet him again, I find how little ground I have gained, or rather that, like Penelope, what I labour at one moment, I undo with my own hands the next. Well, I will do my best till his marriage is announced, and then, if I cannot bear it, I must fly from it. He will think me ungrateful to Lady Avondale, uncourteous to him; but he will soon forget all about me, and it will be so much the better."

She sighed so heavily at the conclusion of this musing, that Lady Avondale started, and

asked what she could be thinking of. This was rather a puzzling question, and Lady Rosamond could get out of the scrape only by the broad assertion that she was yawning.

“Very flattering that to your companion,” said Lady Avondale; “but I think, my dear, you have rather got into the habit, of late, of not being amused. My father’s house was certainly dull for you, but Sir Hubert’s was gay enough, and you had young ladies to imitate you, and young gentlemen to fall in love with you, much the same as at home. Is any thing making you uncomfortable, or are you not well?”

“I believe I am quite well,” said Lady Rosamond, trying to smile; “but it is true, that I am grown stupid and lethargic of late, and am not therefore very amusable; besides, you know I am not fond of strangers.”

“True: but people must always be strangers once; and I think you have seen enough of the Seymours, the Savilles, and the Solways, to have passed that period with them.”

“Certainly, and I like them all more or less. I seldom was in a house where I liked so many people altogether, I think.”

“Then, my dear, if the society suited you, and liked you, why were you dull?”

“ Indeed, I don’t know, Ma’am ?”

“ Well, perhaps you do not ; so I won’t expect a reason if you have none to give me : but there is another thing that vexes me, and that is, the disinclination you appear to feel for my old and valued friend, De Lisle. It is impossible you can object to his manners, for one sees few such ; tell me honestly what objection you can have to his character, and, as I have known him rather longer than you, I may be able to prove to you that you are mistaken.”

“ I never thought of objecting to him in any way ; but you do not surely expect me to be as eloquent in his praise, as Mrs. Solway, who, one may say, owes her marriage to him ; or Lady James, who cannot move without asking his advice ; or Gertrude and her sister, who seem to have been mewed up in some inaccessible ruin till he came like an enchanter to break the spell and restore them to civilized society. When he does as much for me as he has done for all his other inmates, I promise to be as grateful as they are : *en attendant*, since he is neither my friend, relative, nor lover, I will leave it to others to ‘applaud him to the echo ;’ I am sure they acquit themselves well.”

“ So, then, you are weary of hearing them call Aristides, the Just ? That is not like you, my

Rosamond! but let that pass, we cannot always regulate our fancy by even-handed justice, and we can never attach ourselves to any one merely because others wish we should do so. Hubert is neither your lover nor that of any one, but he is willing to be the friend of all who surround him; and it is my opinion at least (though probably you will rank me among the prejudiced persons who set him up as their idol,) that his regard is worth cultivating."

"Very possibly; but I have not been fortunate enough to hit on the right way."

"Have you tried?"

"I think so; at least I have intended it."

"Well if it's nothing more than a fit of shyness towards a man so much your senior, I will not quarrel with you any more, as there is a hope such a sensation may cease."

"So *much* my senior!"

"Do you not call fourteen years a considerable difference?"

"Not much in a man surely?"

"Well, my dear, I will not contend that point with you; I don't suppose it would offend him if he heard you looked on him as your contemporary."

"I don't suppose he would care what I thought of him."

“What a sudden fit of humility, my dear Rosamond! With all my regard for De Lisle, I can't consider him so exempt from weakness as not to be flattered if his housemaid thought him a *very* young man.” But I did not say he was *very* young; and you do not think him very old, I imagine: all I meant, or ever do mean to say of Sir Hubert, is, that I do not think him any thing remarkable in age, or any thing else.”

“That is just what I lament; for it so happens, that I do think him remarkable in many things, and would gladly have had you entertain the same opinion of him.”

“I promise to *do* so when he entertains the same opinion of me that he does of you.”

“He cannot very well care for a person who evidently cares so little for him. In the world, there might have been nothing peculiar in your manner; but we have seen him surrounded by his most intimate friends, in the country, where form and ceremony were banished, and you cannot imagine how your cold stateliness contrasted with the artless and joyous tone of the Miss Savilles.”

“I dare say it did, for they are mere children.”

“I am sorry to say they are,” said Lady Avondale, with an altered manner, as if the observation had changed the current of her thoughts.

“And why sorry? they are delightful as they are.”

“True, for you and me; but had Anne been six or seven years older, she would have made just the wife for Hubert.”

“And would *you* have wished him to have married her?”

“Why should you doubt it? I trust, my dear Rosamond, you are not suspecting me of the absurdity of falling in love with him myself?”

Lady Rosamond felt her respiration getting much embarrassed at this unexpected remark. Summoning all her courage, however, with the desperate resolution of ending the uncertainties that had so long harassed her, she answered steadily, “If you intend to marry him, my dear Lady Avondale, I don’t quite see why it would be so absurd to be in love with him.”

“There we differ then. I am not *à la rigueur*, too old to marry again, (though it is by no means a thing I am desirous of,) but I certainly am too old for an interesting victim to

*la belle passion.* There are sometimes very slight shades between what is ridiculous and what is rational. De Lisle and I are very old friends, and if it suited us to pitch our tent together, we might do so, I should think, without exciting any particular wonder; but were I to come out in the new character of a fond, sighing Chlœe, in a pastoral scene, with a pet lamb by my side, retained by a garland of wild flowers, and De Lisle be drawn languishing with a pipe in his hand, I can fancy nothing more supereminently silly, and unsuited even to his age, and most assuredly to mine.”

“Such a picture would be far from edifying at any age, and I retain my original opinion, that as long as it is reasonable and wise to marry a man, it is quite fair and reasonable to love him.”

“And so I do, my dear, most truly and earnestly; and that is why I would rather see him united to some gay young thing, who can cheer him when he is sad, amuse him when he is weary, and laugh at him when he is fanciful; rather—very considerably rather—than marry him myself; because I do not think at my time of life I can do all this.”

“And is it because Anne is so much wilder

than her sister, you fix upon her in preference?"

"Just so. Gertrude is grave, sententious, and sentimental. When she saw a person out of spirits, she would be too apt to moralize with them, which would make them duller, or to weep with them, which would make them sadder. No—Anne's is the light fantastic spirit that rises ever buoyant on the waves of time, and wraps itself in rainbow-hues even while the storm is bursting. The light of her smile would chase a heavier gloom than ever sat on the brow of De Lisle. But, alas! she is, as you say, a child, and even after she has ceased to be one, he will long continue to view her in that light."

"Do you not think the chances are, that Sir Hubert is the best judge of what will contribute to his own happiness? and do you not think that, if he had liked any one better than you, he would have proposed to that person rather than to you?"

"To your first question I answer positively, no. He has had a most prosperous life, and has never been happy; therefore I have some right to think he has not been a good judge in the matter. As for his liking any one bet-

ter than me, at this moment, it is probable, he does not; but he may do so one of these days, and you will allow it would be pleasanter for me to make such a discovery before I married him than afterwards. He has rather a tenacious temper, which I did not wish to rouse by opposition. While he thinks he may marry me any day, the facility of the thing will prevent his attaching much importance to it. I would rather the change appeared to come from him; or else he would be mortified and angry with me, which I should regret."

"If you only wait for him to alter his mind, which it appears to me there can be no reason for his doing, I think I may as well congratulate you at once."

"You are in a vast hurry, Rosamond! but you will find I stick to my snail's pace. I am slow, however, without being anxious. I am desirous of doing what is likely to be best for De Lisle without any selfish consideration whatever, and that not from any superabundance of generosity, but merely from the conviction that happiness, such as I once believed in and anticipated, is but an illusion of youth. The longer we chase this phantom, the more restless and dissatisfied we are, suffering in the

mean time much positive substantial good to escape our grasp. I have lived long enough to distinguish between what is visionary and what is real: having no great expectations, (in this world, I mean,) I can henceforth have no great disappointments. I do for the best, and await the result—with gratitude, when that result is pleasing to mere human feelings—with willing submission when it is not, satisfied that all is for our good either way. It has pleased God to give me a strong frame and a sane mind: while such blessings are continued to me, I am equally capable of enjoying the many good things lavished upon me, and of bearing up against the privation of any of them. If De Lisle continues steadfast to his purpose, (which between you and me I think he will not do,) I shall marry him with a reasonable hope of adding to my comfort. If he does not, I have other ties in life, other means of enjoyment; and while I am permitted to be useful, I cannot fail of being happy—in that limited sense of the word in which, after thirty, we all use it.”

Lady Avondale paused, and the seriousness of her manner and calmness of her feelings awed her youthful companion into silence.

There was much food for meditation in what she had heard. It seemed strange to her that the chances of becoming or not the wife of De Lisle should be considered of so little importance, and should be dwelt upon without emotion. One moment she envied Lady Avondale's equanimity; the next, she lamented that Sir Hubert should have fixed on a person to whom it was of so little consequence to have been thus selected. There was certainly nothing to prevent the marriage, and yet it seemed to her there was no reason why it should take place. If both parties stood still, there was no one to urge them forward. That so serious an engagement, which, she fancied, must produce either happiness or misery, should be so idly entered into on one side, and so carelessly agreed to on the other, was altogether beyond her comprehension. She was not the more easily reconciled to the conduct of others for being dissatisfied with her own. How simple, candid, and upright was Lady Avondale's behaviour to her, and how ill did she return her confidence! She blushed at the unfairness of reading the heart of another, from whom she concealed all that passed in her own. Yet, to confess an unrequited attachment was not merely a humilia-

tion (for to that she might have submitted, as a kind of expiatory penance), but a weakness she would have despised in another, an indelicacy from which every womanly feeling revolted.

“What ought never to have existed,” thought she, “ought assuredly never to be revealed; especially when its revelation may injure others, at any rate cannot benefit them.” She considered and reconsidered, but could make nothing of her own situation, or calculate with any certainty on that of others. We daily see thousands, without any remarkable strength of mind, enduring known and positive evils for which there is no remedy; but thus to feel oneself like a helpless weed on the face of the waters, pushed backwards and forwards at the direction of every breeze and at the mercy of every current, is a situation in which men are rarely placed, and of the enfeebling wretchedness of which they have therefore but a faint notion. Women are perpetually thus at the disposal of persons and events, and often droop accordingly in situations that strike no one as eminently unfortunate. Lady Rosamond, to all appearance independent and removed from such evils, had contrived to place her feelings, if not her actions, at the disposal of many persons and cir-

cumstances, whose influence over them had no necessary existence. It was a pang the more, to know that it was her own doing (at least her own weakness), and that she was the shuttlecock in the hands of unconscious players, to be driven about by every careless and random stroke. She revolted from it, and struggled in vain: she was impatient with her own folly, mourned her own degradation, but so strong was the hold De Lisle had taken upon her fancy and her heart, that nothing short of the consciousness of guilt could have cured her; and as long as he continued free, and Lady Avondale wished that he should so continue, her affection was as devoid of sin, as it was destitute of prudence.

After much consideration and many wise resolutions, she at last discovered that too much thought is as useless as too little. Her part was altogether passive (often the hardest to play well), she had but to wait; and as conjectures on the future could bring her no relief, she determined to avert her eyes from it altogether, and do diligently the work which the present takes care to cut out for us. It is so natural to man to look forward, and the instinct thus implanted in our minds, in order to teach us to look beyond this life to another, is so very

forcible, that few things are more difficult than to adhere steadfastly to such a plan. She was assisted in her endeavours by her attention being called off herself, to be fixed on her half-sister, who came with her aunt, Mrs. Trevannon, to pay her first visit at Avondale Priory. The reasons of this long estrangement will be best explained by giving a slight account of Lady Rosamond's parents.

## CHAPTER IX.

ROSAMOND CHURCHILL had been the favourite companion of Ellen Parry, and when she became Lady Merrion, the affectionate admiration she had ever felt for her, rather increased than diminished. Yet Ellen had done enough to weaken most juvenile attachments, by opposing to the utmost of her power the predilection her thoughtless companion early entertained for Lord Merrion. Not that there was apparently much to object to in the young man; but Ellen, well acquainted with the positive temper of old Mr. Churchill, and his aversion to such sprigs of nobility, as he called them, saw very plainly there was no chance of his ever consenting to the match. Indeed Lord Merrion took no pains to remove the prejudices of the old man, because he had prejudices of his own that induced

him to look down on this son of trade with as much contempt as the other bestowed on him.

Rosamond was beautiful, and, though she expected a very large fortune from her father, she was not altogether dependent on him; so that Lord Merrion, seeing no adequate reason for humouring Mr. Churchill, prevailed on the daughter to accompany him to Scotland, on the old plea, that when their marriage could no longer be prevented, it would be pardoned. No concession, however, no entreaty on the part of the young Countess, produced the desired reconciliation. Ellen gave herself as much trouble to bring it about as she had taken to prevent the offence, but in vain; and when Lady Merrion's life was despaired of, the only symptom of relenting shown by the obdurate old man, was a message through Miss Parry to his daughter, desiring her to set her mind at rest about her child, to whom he had bequeathed the property denied to her mother. Lady Merrion was lively and thoughtless, but had a sweet affectionate temper. She drooped beneath miseries of her own creating. She could not bear to go into public, and appear to brave by heartless gaiety the resentment of her parents.

She lost all her children in the first few

months of their existence, excepting Rosamond, who, born rather unexpectedly at the house of Lord Merrion's only sister, had remained with her. She was now to be taken home, but her father, convinced he had lost the others through mismanagement, insisted on Lady Merrion's leaving Rosamond entirely to the care of the maid placed about her by his sister. This maid was not slow in discovering the influence she might acquire in her master's family. She terrified Lady Merrion, whose spirits were now thoroughly broken, and flattered her lord. She would never go to London, where she had less her own way, and persuaded Lord Merrion the air was bad for the child. He accordingly took a house for her at some distance from town, when the family left the country; and all his wife could gain was having her child within a walk of Lady Susan's, where Ellen might occasionally see it, and inform her of its welfare.

Lord Merrion was really fond of his child and solicitous for its health, but, as Rosamond was not old enough to be very companionable, he naturally talked to the maid. She was a bold, artful, and tolerably pretty woman, who left no means untried to secure an interest in

her master's favour. Ellen soon perceived that all means were thought legitimate to obtain so desirable an end; but, though shocked and vexed, she did not choose to interfere, otherwise than by guarding Lady Merrion from the knowledge of a circumstance that could not but have added to her sorrows. It could not, however, be long concealed, though the broken-hearted Rosamond was willing to appear a dupe, and accepted with apparent gratitude permission to take her child to the sea-side, whither she was going with Miss Parry, unaccompanied by her unworthy rival.

Lady Julia Trevannon took advantage of the grief her brother expressed and felt at the death of his wife, to break off a connection she considered as so disgraceful. Lord Merrion promised to give up Martha; and, on that condition, Lady Julia promised to take charge of her son. Lady Julia died within the year of her brother's mourning; and it was then found how useless it is to exact promises from those who would not do what was right without them. Lord Merrion had forgotten his recent affliction, or sought consolation for it in a renewal of his intimacy with Martha. She had hopes of inducing him to marry her, and he would

possibly have done so sooner, but for the ascendancy which his sister-in-law, Mrs. Trevannon, had over him.

In the end, however, the worst influence gained the supremacy, and his marriage was publicly announced. It was shortly after followed by the birth of a daughter ; and almost immediately it was discovered that the marriage would not hold good in law, owing to the omission of some indispensable ceremony, so that the title of the little Lady Elizabeth became more than dubious. Lord Merrion, anxious, since he had braved the censure of the world, not to do it for nothing, was re-married. Still he was uncomfortable at the situation in which he had placed his child. Aware that she could receive no protection from her mother, he looked forward to the insults and mortifications she was liable to receive, should it suit any one to deny her legitimacy and consequent rank in society.

His son might make his way for himself, and, having no pretensions to title, was less at the mercy of the unfeeling or malevolent. He took the singular though not unwise resolution, of imploring Mrs. Trevannon to have mercy on his innocent girl. He represented, that, but for her, he would have been married long before,

in which case, being less hurried, he would have taken more precautions ; his first marriage would then have been valid, and his child's rank unquestioned.

Mrs. Trevannon was a young widow, neither rich nor poor, handsome nor ugly, nor in any way very remarkable. She came of a proud and somewhat puritanical family, was cold in her manners, aristocratic in her notions, yet kind in her actions. She had been warmly attached to her husband, deeply deplored his loss, and could not long resist the ardent solicitations of that husband's brother. She adopted the little Elizabeth without thinking it necessary to make any stipulations with respect to Lady Merrion, whose name, she took it for granted, could never be mentioned in her presence. Lord Merrion knew her so well, he never hinted at the possibility of Elizabeth seeing her mother, and Lady Merrion felt in her turn the bitterness of being deprived, without her consent, of her child.

Mrs. Trevannon was but slightly acquainted with Miss Parry. She looked on her as the friend of the Churchills, through whom Lady Rosamond would be splendidly provided for. She dismissed her very much from her mind,

till Lady Elizabeth had ceased to be a child. Looking forward, then, to introducing her shortly into society, she began to consider that it would be a great support to her to appear in public with her elder and more prosperous sister. She sought out Lady Avondale, who neither repelled nor encouraged her; but it was otherwise with her husband, who, hoping to effect a union between Rosamond and his son, did not desire to surround her with relations of her own, who might not be disposed to further his views. Lady Rosamond herself, but imperfectly acquainted with her sister's situation, saw in her nothing but a pale and timid child, and was but little attracted by the precise and formal manners of her aunt.

Mrs. Trevannon, on her part, was unwilling to court persons who appeared so little flattered by her attention, and there was thus no other result of the step she took, than a yearly letter between the sisters, which was irksome to the elder one and alarming to the other. On the death of Lord Avondale, Mrs. Trevannon paid a condoling visit in form to the widow. A longer one was then projected; and shortly after Lady Avondale's return from her father's, it was put into execution. Lady Rosamond,

glad to turn her thoughts from herself, devoted herself to her half-sister, and was well repaid for the trouble. Lady Elizabeth would have had a fine figure if she had not been so very slender, and a handsome face, but for the want of complexion: her manners were gentle, shy, yet caressing; and her countenance, when animated, peculiarly pleasing. With a less powerful mind than her sister, she was a more natural character. She had not Rosamond's self-command, and she did not require it; a more facile temper enabling her unconsciously to take the tone of circumstances, and adapt herself to the dispositions of others. Her flexible character assimilated itself with every thing around her, and her mild and peaceful spirit re-acted in turn on her associates.

Willing to think well of every one, nothing was easier than to dupe her feeling rightly herself, nothing was more difficult than to lead her into error of conduct. As soon as constraint was banished in the intercourse between the sisters, they were mutually charmed with each other. Elizabeth, indeed, retained some awe of Rosamond; and with her accustomed humility, felt fearful of sounding entirely a character which she thought elevated above her mental

sphere ; but, what was more surprising, the elder sister was as much at a loss thoroughly to fathom the simple artless mind of the younger. To a certain point she was easily understood, and an open book could not be more quickly read ; but there was evidently a limit to this knowledge, a sanctuary for the inmost spirit, whither no one was invited, and the key to which Lady Rosamond would fain have possessed,—not from curiosity—but interest ; for she saw plainly that what lay thus removed from sight was painful and depressing, though glossed over by natural cheerfulness and a contented temper.

Some time back, and it might never have been detected ; but Lady Rosamond had found from experience what it is to bear within the folds of the heart what can never be drawn forth to the light of day, and she had acquired a confused impression that every one suffered, because she knew that she suffered herself. Confidence, however, is not to be taken by storm, and Lady Rosamond shrank from remarking to her sister any thing to which she did not allude of her own accord, fearful that it might be some longing after home, some yearning after a mother, at whose very name the high soul of

Rosamond sickened with disgust and abhorrence.

One day when the sisters had walked towards the village, their young elastic spirits rising beneath the influence of a clear frosty morning, and forgetting, or seeming to forget, every full-grown care, in the juvenile amusement of casting snow-balls at each other, they were overtaken by the curate, whose ruddy face was shining with unwonted glee. He shortly explained its cause, by mentioning the promotion of one of his sons, who was in the navy; and, arresting the ladies in a cold slippery lane, proceeded to read the letter which conveyed such pleasing and unexpected intelligence. The weather appeared to have left the souls of the party unchilled, and the joyous letter of the young sailor was listened to with nearly as much satisfaction as was evident in the person reading it. When the conversation was exhausted, and the happy father left them to make the same call on the sympathy of his next neighbour, Lady Rosamond turned her deep-blue eyes on her sister, fraught with an expression peculiar to herself, and which, like the spirit that animated the faultless statue of Pygmalion, changed mortal beauty to divine.

Lady Elizabeth answered the look by a smile of affectionate admiration, and after a moment's pause, asked if she had any uncommon interest in the young man, to whose good fortune she seemed so alive.

“Not so,” she replied; “I know only that he is poor and deserving; that he has entered an arduous and a glorious profession, unaided and unfavoured; that the eye of Providence has been on him, and the Unseen Hand led him onward. The mere instinct of sympathy teaches us to rejoice in the joy of the youth, and the pride of his father; but there is yet a deeper, brighter feeling in witnessing a successful struggle made against the difficulties of life, when every step is a conquest, and every hope the reward of some vigorous exertion. We know that thousands sink; it is exhilarating to see one reach the shore triumphant. It is something, too, to belong to a country, where in many ways a chance is held out to all; where merit may rise; talent may find its level; and well-directed energy may place the son of the villager on a footing with the proudest of our land. This is glorious—and this is only in Britain!”

“If such feelings,” said Lady Elizabeth hesitatingly, “be any thing but transient enthusi-

asm, what becomes of your prejudice in favour of birth, of your aristocratic notions, and, may I add, your haughty manners?"

"They are not so inconsistent as you appear to think. Because I would sink the dregs of society, whether rich or poor, to the bottom, and elevate what might reflect credit on it, I am no leveller. I do not think vulgarity a merit; nor do I fancy it a proof of liberality to place the squire of yesterday on a footing with the poor representative of an ancient family. What is old, is generally respectable; and while more refined notions of honour, and more polished manners, are thought characteristics of the higher orders of society, to attain them will be an object with many, and a great general improvement. If the system of equality could raise all the poor and ignorant and mean-spirited out of the mire, it would be well; but, on the contrary, it has been found easier to debase the high than to refine the low; and the too near approximation of the classes of society tends rather to injure the lofty, than to polish the grovelling. Besides, where would be the triumph due to merit, if it became so easy to rise? If we have no high standard, ambition will be paralysed. If we make the aristocracy of the country what

it ought to be—what I hope it often is—there will be the more honour in being placed, by public opinion, on a level with it. There are many ladders to fame, but the navy is the best and brightest—the best school for generous chivalric feelings.”

“Yes,” replied Lady Elizabeth rather sadly, “fame may still be gained in that profession, but the good times when money could be got too, appear to have gone by.”

“Money!” repeated Lady Rosamond in a tone of surprise: “Ay, true: money is doubtless a good thing for those who have their way to make; but if it be a *first* object, there are other trades more inviting.”

“I see, Rosamond, the want of money has never appeared as an evil to you, or you would not scorn it so deeply.”

“I do not scorn any thing that has the power to contribute to happiness; but I have not quite made up my mind that money has that power.”

“Not in itself, possibly; yet the want of it may prevent happiness, and even destroy it.” Lady Elizabeth’s voice faltered, and she sighed so deeply, that her sister turned round to look at her. She saw, however, no trace of emotion on her placid brow; and her eye, instead of droop-

ing with the consciousness of concealed feelings, was lifted steadily upward, as if she looked for strength rather than feared detection.

A thought flashed across Lady Rosamond's mind, and she quickly replied, "These opinions, I trust, are the offspring of fancy, not of experience. There is but one thing I should find it hard to pardon my sister, and that would be her suffering from the mere want of what I have in abundance."

"I did not know you then," said Elizabeth sadly ;—"and now—it is over."

"Are you sure, quite sure?" asked Rosamond eagerly.

"Sure—quite sure!" repeated Elizabeth, faintly smiling. "What are we *quite* sure of in this life? But I believe it,—and pardon me, if I cannot speak more of it just now ;"—and she drew her veil across her face, to conceal the tears that fell heavily over it. There was a long silence, broken at last by Elizabeth addressing some children going home from school ; and Rosamond ventured not for a long time to revert to a conversation evidently too much for her sister's fortitude.

## CHAPTER X.

TIME passed on. Mrs. Trevannon's visit was over, and Lady Rosamond's birthday approached. Sir Hubert made his appearance in the midst of the rejoicings that event gave rise to. He was received by Lady Avondale with cordial regard, by her step-sons with polite indifference, and by Rosamond with real emotion and studied ceremony. With a view to avoid all remark from the mistress of the house, she tried rather a more courteous manner, though she was continually afraid of betraying herself, and suffering kindness to catch the tone of tenderness. She was naturally called upon to show him more attention, having in a degree to do the honours of her home to a stranger; and as Lady Avondale's avocations were many and various, she was continually called upon to show De Lisle some walk or

ride in the neighbourhood, which was deemed worthy of notice. To Sir Hubert she appeared quite a different person from what she had done hitherto, and a much more attractive one. He had till now seen her surrounded by strangers, but at home she was known and valued by all who approached her. The young men evidently considered her as a very dear sister; and the playful fondness of Charles on one hand, and the more sober regard of his brother on the other, produced on her part a conduct equally affectionate, but totally different in expression.

This variety of manner was strange to De Lisle, and yet not unpleasing. It led him to remark other shades towards other persons; and he was flattered at perceiving the deference paid to himself. Over every one else she held an undisputed sway, in some cases not even excepting Lady Avondale. She grasped the reins, it is true, in a light and graceful manner, yet still she never let them fall altogether; but over him she cast no spell, and he stood alone on enchanted ground, where all bowed before a queen, who had never claimed him as her subject. Gratified at this tacit acknowledgment of his own superiority, he redoubled his atten-

tions, and, instead of merely trying to like her, he now strove to make her like him. Her spirits rose with the consciousness of having made a great step in his regard, but her fear of detection was unabated ; and Sir Hubert, mortified at making, as he supposed, so little progress, began to quarrel even with her submission and docility, fearing that she considered him in a more paternal light than quite suited the interests of his vanity.

Meanwhile, these changes, slight as they were, did not escape Lady Avondale's penetration. She speedily guessed that each liked the other more than either would be willing to avow ; and wondered how soon pride and shyness would be overcome by passion and opportunity. Hating match-making, she was determined to accelerate nothing ;—at the same time, she was equally resolved not to be in the way of a union that promised fair for happiness. She took, therefore, every opportunity of talking over her plans to De Lisle : dwelling on her affection for her stepsons, and the pleasure with which she looked forward to keeping Avondale's house, since it was so much his wish to detain her. Sir Hubert understood all this, as meaning to give him his full liberty ;

but having no other views himself, he did not imagine his friend Ellen could have any for him. He supposed one of these days she would marry him: he had never been in any great hurry; and he did not acknowledge to himself that at the present moment he was in less than ever. The house was large, and had been overflowing with company during the festivities on Lady Rosamond's account; it was now returned to comparative tranquillity, there not being above two or three guests besides De Lisle. One day at breakfast, on the newspapers being brought in, Charles Avondale, glancing his eye over one, exclaimed:

“The Trafalgar is at Portsmouth! we shall have Villars here in a moment.”

Lady Rosamond set down the tea-pot, though in the midst of pouring out a cup for De Lisle, and insisted upon being shown the paragraph. She read it with a brightened eye and a glowing cheek, and seemed disposed to fall into a fit of musing, had she not been roused by Avondale calling loudly for his breakfast. She gave him the cup intended for Sir Hubert, and Lady Avondale was obliged to remind her whom she had forgotten. At this charge she coloured still more deeply, and handed him

a cup with a trembling hand. He had remarked it all, and suddenly remembered Captain Villars was the person Lady Rosamond had been accused of flirting with, at the time she was supposed to be engaged to Avondale. He felt uncomfortable and ill at ease: it certainly was nothing to him—*could* be nothing to him, who she liked; but still there was no reason why he should not be interested for her; and Captain Villars, though well-born, (he was her own cousin,) was a young man who had his fortune to seek; who besides, from his profession, would be liable to leave her: in short, it was so silly a thing, he might be allowed to hope it could not take place; and he did hope it devoutly.

“Rosa,” said Charles at the low window, some time after breakfast, “I want you to come and look at my puppy; it won’t eat!”

“I will come directly,” said she, rising from the table where she had been writing. “Will you, Avondale, seal my letter, and direct it to Villars? the bag is on the table.” And with these words she left the room.

This was more than Sir Hubert could understand. That the interest she had evinced for Villars should induce her to write to him, he thought nothing of; but her sitting down for

that purpose in the public drawing-room, her openly and unnecessarily avowing it, all looked more like friendship than love. He was provoked at the tranquillity with which Lord Avondale executed her commands, and the incurious manner in which he chucked the letter into the post-bag, and delivered it to the servant. He ventured a few inquiries respecting Captain Villars, to which Avondale gave vague unsatisfactory answers: all he could gather was, that he was an excellent officer, and a pleasant companion; a little too thoughtless, perhaps;—and with this scanty information he was obliged to be content. Three days, however, from that time cleared up the mystery, by the arrival of the gentleman himself.

It was near dinner-time, and Lady Rosamond was out riding with Avondale. Sir Hubert had been shooting with Charles; but as both were unsuccessful, they had returned home earlier than usual, and found the chaise driving to the door that contained Captain Villars. Charles pushed on his pony and greeted him most cordially; Lady Avondale did the same when they entered the house, and presented him to De Lisle; but Villars was in no mood for ceremony,—he held out his hand as though

he were an old friend, showed his range of brilliant white teeth, and resumed his account of himself, his ship, and the limited period of his stay, to the lady of the house and to Charles alternately, satisfied that they were equally interested in the matter.

De Lisle's scrutiny, though keen, could not long be prejudiced. Villars was not handsome, and his manners had something of the bluntness indicative of his profession, rather than the polish belonging to his high blood; but there was a look of enjoyment, a tone of benevolence, an air of manly sincerity about him, which did not indeed give the whole measure of his character, but produced a host of impressions in his favour. Still he wondered that Rosamond, so refined, so fastidious even, should be captivated by a person he should have thought so uncongenial to her; to be sure, it was by no means certain that she *was* so captivated, and while he was debating the probabilities, she galloped up to the door, and was in the room in a moment.

“Villars here?” cried she with animation, holding out both her hands to him: but, warm as the reception was, it did not satisfy him, who, embracing her without ceremony, exclaim-

ed, "God bless you, my excellent cousin!" in a tone of such heart-felt sincerity that even the decorous Lady Avondale could but smile at the unusual action that accompanied it.

Rosamond disengaged herself with perfect good-humour, unmixed with embarrassment, and laughingly asked him if he was quite sure he was not mad.

"Quite sure I am *not* mad! most dignified Rosamond!—*au contraire*, (as our neighbours say to every possible assertion you make to them,) I am morally certain that I *am* mad, but of such sweet madness, that though you have produced it, I doubt your best reasons making me willing to be cured of it." Then seizing her hand, he led her to a distant window, where he continued to speak in what he fancied an undertone, but which was not so low as to escape the keen ears of De Lisle, though he mechanically retreated from the spot where he stood, to a greater distance from the speakers.

"So, you received my letter, I see," observed Lady Rosamond, "and you are unchanged?"

"Unchanged! when did ever you know honest salt-water wash out any thing *real*?"

"So I thought; but Elizabeth was vastly humble, and would not believe me."

“ Pshaw ! she believed you fast enough, but she had no objection to make you repeat the assertion, like a little demure sly gipsey as she is. However, I have seen her ; so she has no excuse for incredulity now.”

“ Seen her ! how had you time ?”

“ By sleeping in the mail, instead of my bed.

“ And your ship ? and the Admiralty ?”

“ Fair and softly, good coz—business, they say, should go before love, and so it did for long enough. I thought it time to let love go before business ; besides, I am on my way to town at this very hour.”

“ I see you are travelling fast, and we were exactly in your road.”

“ I must send you to learn of your sister, I perceive. I promise you she would not have thought it odd had I sent ship and Admiralty and all to the devil to see her an hour the sooner ; but you, forsooth, must preach that I go ten miles out of my way to see you. If I were in town *now*, I could do no business till to-morrow morning ; therefore, if I travel through part of the night, all will be well.”

“ All’s well, to be sure, that ends well,” said Lady Rosamond smiling.

“ Don’t shake your head so ominously—you don’t know what a steady, reflecting, calculating husband I mean to make, and what a useful brother-in-law you have purchased.”

“ Purchased !” said Lady Rosamond, reproachfully.

“ Ay, purchased ! I always call things by their names—my love was not purchased ; but though I gave that ungrudgingly, it did not enrich my poor Elizabeth much, and brought us no nearer our union. You have named it to Lady Avondale ?”

“ No ; I have not, because I did not know whether you still desired it, after my sister had so positively given you up.”

“ Pooh ! who minds such givings up ! no one in earnest. If I had not known the impediment—if I had thought indifference made any part of it—then, indeed, I might have felt differently.”

Advancing suddenly towards Lady Avondale, totally regardless of the presence of her sons and a stranger, he exclaimed, “ Wish me joy, my dear lady ! Thanks to Lady Rosamond’s talents for match-making, I am to be a Benedict forthwith.”

“Indeed !” said Lady Avondale with a smile ; “ I did not think Rosamond’s talents lay that way—and who is the happy lady ?”

“ My cousin, Elizabeth Trevannon. We have been long bemoaning our cruel fate ; and the poverty that made matrimony impossible, and might have pined away our youth after the same comfortable fashion, had not Rosamond extracted the secret from her sister, and resolved on portioning her.”

“ My dear child,” said Lady Avondale, doubtingly, “ you have other sisters—you cannot give them all dowries.”

“ Why, no, not exactly,” said Lady Rosamond ; “ but my other sisters have no existence for me, since I do not know them :—now I do know Elizabeth, and love her. I have not, after all, been so generous as you might think from Villars’ statement. I have not even shared my wealth with her ; and the small sum I have offered, I have not the least objection to being repaid, should Admiral Villars make my brother elect his heir. At any rate, I have more than I have any use for.”

“ Certainly,” said Avondale, who had listened with a cloud on his brow to the previous conversation, “ you have more than you want

now ; but should you, like Lady Elizabeth, select a husband rich only in merit, you may regret having diminished your own resources."

"I must e'en content myself with his merit then," said Lady Rosamond ; " which is not the commonest thing to be rich in, after all."

"My sweet Rosa," said Charles, " don't mind my brother's wisdom ; make as many people happy as you can ; faith, 'tis no such easy matter to have it in one's power ; and then, you know, if you can't make shift to be happy yourself, why, it will be something to think of."

This was a random stroke that went straight to Lady Rosamond's heart ; she coloured, and drooped her humid eyes. Attributing her emotion to shyness, De Lisle took her hand, and warmly applauded her conduct.

"I envy you, Rosamond," he added, emphatically, " and would give any thing to have a dear sister to enrich, and to offer to such a man as Captain Villars."

The person of whom he spoke was conversing earnestly with Lady Avondale. He heard, however, the observation, and turning round his head, smiled and nodded in mingled ap-

probation of the sentiment, and thankfulness for the good opinion expressed of himself. When he had left them, Sir Hubert asked Lady Rosamond if she had been serious when she talked of his returning his wife's fortune at any future time.

“ Yes, and no,” she replied. “ Yes, if it be a relief to him from a painful sense of obligation—no, if it suits him better to retain it. You are aware that his father was a Trevannon, and took his wife's name. All the money he gained thereby having been long spent, he was rather desirous his children should return to his family name ; and, perhaps, had he lived they might have done so. Since his death, Admiral Villars has lived with his sister, and particularly attached himself to this young man, who was by him placed in his present profession. His allowance, however, has been small, and he has never held out any hope of increasing it. I have a sort of regard for the old man myself ; but those in his dependence are in considerable awe of him : indeed, I can fancy his not being just the person to fix on as the confidant of a love-tale.”

“ But do you suppose he will give the young couple any thing now ?”

“ I really can form no opinion about it. I never quite understood whether his antipathy to matrimony was a genuine feeling, or put on to frighten his nephews and nieces from early and imprudent marriages. I suspect much of the *brusquerie* that scares his sister and her children is feigned. If he once betrayed any feeling, he would be liable to be imposed upon ; and there is nothing an old bachelor dreads so much, or which so frequently happens to him.”

“ A married man, then, you think, is never imposed upon ?”

“ I think no such thing : but he cannot be so to the same extent. A bachelor, when he arrives at a certain age, is the legitimate prey of his servants, his agents, and all his relatives, to the hundredth generation. Nay, even an officious friend, who pins himself upon him, thinks himself entitled to be offended, if, after all, the said bachelor slips through his fingers, either by dying and leaving no will, or, worse than all, by marrying and loading himself with his wife’s family in addition to his own.”

“ So you grant no salvation to such a man ; and even when he humbly confesses his error,

and marries, you will not allow his case to be mended.”

“ No, it is decidedly worse. But why should you pity him?—he might have thought of that before. What prevented him?”

“ Many reasons perhaps—and some, it may be, not altogether bad ones.”

“ If you intend belonging to the fraternity, and so defend them beforehand, I have done. You will find, one of these days, that I am right; and remember, it will then be too late to change.”

“ Positively, Rosa,” said Lord Avondale, “ you make me shudder from head to foot; and rather than encounter a destiny of such indefinite horror, I think I would propose to your maid Bridget.”

“ And be told,” said she laughing, “ that peers are very good things in their way—but, to her ‘poor way of thinking,’ carpenters sometimes are better.”

“ Heyday!” cried Charles, “ it never rains but it pours! So here’s another pathetic tale. Love in a cottage, I suppose, this is to be; and how comes it that you don’t furnish the cottage, and portion the bride, and keep up your new character for match-making?”

“Perhaps, like the fairies of old, I am somewhat capricious in my gifts.”

“Well, I think I must take Bridget under my especial care. I should like to feel important, and fancy myself the promoter of a marriage, and the father of all the young fry—at a respectful distance be it understood, for I could not stand the squalling in my ears. Ah, Rosa! when I think of *that*, all your gloomy colouring of a bachelor’s life sinks before such known and positive horror. The very sight of a cradle, before I have heard the ape within screech, makes me sick.”

“Ah!” exclaimed De Lisle with a look of mock-pathos, “no one knows what he may come to! Here am I, neither very old nor very helpless, and yet, when your mother and all her family left me in the summer, my house looked so dull and empty, I was forced to take refuge beside Solway’s fire-side; and not being yet well broken in to the squalls of brats, I e’en rocked the cradle with my own hands, to keep its inmate quiet.”

“After that,” said Lady Avondale, rising from table, “I can only wish you cradles of your own to rock.”

## CHAPTER XI.

SIR HUBERT departed on the day he had fixed, from Avondale Priory. He made a few faint attempts to revert to his tacit engagement to Ellen, but she appeared hardly to understand him, or at least to attach no importance to the circumstance. Lady Rosamond was of age: her sister's marriage was on the eve of taking place, which assured her another home if Lady Avondale's marriage was displeasing to her. In short, there was no reason against De Lisle's union, except the lukewarmness of the parties. He would rather have been glad of something to excite him, and would have been obliged to any one who would have proved to him that he ought to marry Ellen. He did not think he loved any one better, and, once united to her, he was persuaded he should be happy; but his natural indecision was augmented by her seem-

ing to think it of no consequence; that it was a thing which it would always be time enough to think of, and either to pursue or abandon, almost as chance directed. Besides, on reviewing his conduct, he was aware he had devoted far more of his time and attention to Lady Rosamond, than to Lady Avondale.

As matters stood, it was of no consequence: but had he been married, this could not have been, without pain to one party, and injury to the other. It was very unlucky he could not marry them both; but as that unfortunately was not the custom, it remained to consider what he should do with the younger lady as his inmate, and on what possible footing she could be. She was not of an age to treat as his child: it seemed absurd when she at times called Lady Avondale mamma; yet fair and fresh and youthful-looking as she was, she could hardly pass for his friend and equal. If she had half Ellen's soul, thought he, and would love me but the least bit, I could marry her, and have Lady Avondale live with us; but she is too torpid and haughty. Perhaps she may marry herself shortly, and then nothing can prevent my returning to Ellen. De Lisle unconsciously exemplified, that it is not always an advantage

to have two strings to one's bow: between two very beautiful and accomplished women, the chances were, he would remain single all his life.

Lady Avondale's abode was not far from the sea-side, the vicinity to which tempted him to join a sailing excursion of some friends. As he had almost to pass her door on his way home, he promised to see her then for a day or two. It was very early in Spring, but the weather was more than usually mild, and appeared favourable for *pleasuring*, as it is called by the common people. It proved however otherwise, and Sir Hubert was glad to shorten his wanderings, and find himself again comfortably housed beside the two ladies who ingrossed most of his thoughts.

Though his absence had been short, many things appeared to have occurred during the time. Lady Elizabeth's marriage had taken place, at which Lord Merrion was present; and Villars had thought it right to carry his wife to Merrion Hall, and present her to her mother and sisters. He seemed to have taken a great dislike to Lord Alvanley, her brother, and a great fancy to Lady Julia, the eldest girl at home. Mrs. Villars and the Admiral had been staying with Lady Avondale—the

latter having made a handsome settlement on his nephew; and at the same time recommended to Lady Rosamond not to pride herself on her penetration, as he had long guessed all was not right with Villars, but, having ascertained he had no debts, determined to shut his eyes to any other distress, being quite clear that a sailor or soldier married were good for nothing, and therefore he was doing him a favour by putting off the evil day—in spite of which he appeared much pleased with his new niece, and assured her sister, he considered her the handsomest of the family.

The Villars's were succeeded by Lady James Saville and her daughters, which visit was shortened from motives of prudence, a very lively flirtation having been begun, and carried on with much spirit, between Charles Avondale and Anne. Lady James thinking her daughter rather juvenile for any serious engagement, especially to a youth eminent for unsteadiness, determined on removing to the house of a relation in the same county, which she had hitherto thought too gay for her daughters.

As Gertrude manifested not the slightest partiality for Lord Avondale, she was left be-

hind, and Sir Hubert found her there with much pleasure. He was indeed in the humour to be pleased, to which the absence of the young Avondales contributed considerably. He did not like the elder one, and, though no one could dislike the light-hearted rattling Charles, he was not sorry to have no men in the house, that he might, without doing any thing remarkable, devote more of his time to the ladies. On the evening of his arrival, they were of course all occupied with him, and ready listeners to the ludicrous picture he drew of the distresses that had overpowered him during his party of pleasure. The next day Lady Rosamond offered to show him her museum, which, she said, was in rather better order than his, and had no crazy chairs to break down with one, or circular saws in the very middle of the room to fall over.

“This apartment,” she observed, “is joint property; and I would not bring you here before, because it is a kind of hiding-place of Avondale’s, whither he would be much annoyed at any one pursuing him.”

“Except you, I imagine?” said Miss Saville.

“Oh, Charles and I have, of course, free

entrance. All those stuffed creatures are his, and all the spars and fossils are mine."

"And were you long in making so large a collection?"

"Yes; we have been at it all our lives. It was at first a shabby thing in an out-house, but, as we grew older, we became more fastidious, and more ambitious of seeming wise; and the late Lord Avondale, who favoured any pursuit of mine that was in common with his sons', especially with the elder one, built this room for us, and made some handsome additions to our stores. Dear Gertrude, don't touch those bottles. That part of the room is Avondale's laboratory, and I assure you even *I* don't venture to interfere with his property."

"Then I know not who would," said Miss Saville, shrinking back in alarm. "I know no young man so imposing and solemn as he is; and nothing moves my wonder more than the manner in which you make him fetch and carry, like a tame dog."

"You forget that we have been brought up together, and have hardly ever been separated."

"I doubt the being able to make my brother as useful though," rejoined Miss Saville.

“Because he is older than you, in the first place, and because he *is* your brother, in the next. Most boys think their sisters born to pet them, and bear with them; they don't think they have any right to be angry with them; and though this wears off as they grow older, it is not often they bestow much courtesy upon them, until youth is nearly fled, and they appear to them in a new and more respectable light, as somebody's wife or somebody's mother.”

“Somebody's! anybody's?” asked Miss Saville, in a tone of discomfort.

“You had better ask Sir Hubert,” said Lady Rosamond, smiling, “unless he has too much gallantry to confess that the destiny of women is *thus* fulfilled in the eyes of the world, without any reference to the characters or dispositions either of their husband or children.”

Miss Saville looked so uncomfortable at Lady Rosamond's raillery, that De Lisle took compassion on her. “Tell her, my dear Gertrude,” said he in an affected *aside*, “that it is quite consistent in so humble a lady to agree with the poet, that women are good for nothing better than ‘to suckle fools and chronicle small beer;’ but that you and I, who stand up for the dignity of human nature, and are ambi-

tious towering spirits—we scorn such base notions.”

Miss Saville laughed, and Lady Rosamond perceiving the tables were turned on her, and quite willing to have the cause of women taken up by De Lisle, affected to lament that both her knights were absent, and she must submit to having no one to defend what she asserted.”

“That’s your own fault, lady fair,” gaily retorted De Lisle; “if you would have named me your knight, you should never have wanted a champion.”

“And if I confer that honour on you now, will you promise to defend all I utter, and justify all I do?”

“Doubtlessly, as a loyal knight should do; but you have given me no colours, tokens, or favours to decorate myself withal, and you cannot bind me with nothing. Shall I wear this blue scarf on my arm, or fasten one of those golden ringlets to my helmet?”

“Why, did you ever hear of so unconscionable a knight! He begins by dictating terms.”

“And you,” said Miss Saville, archly, “will end by acceding to them all.”

“How so?” asked Lady Rosamond, colour-

ing between embarrassment and anger. Gertrude did not notice her emotion, and replied with simplicity—

“Nay, what is worth having is worth purchasing—nothing for nothing in this cold calculating age.”

“Why, you must all allow,” said De Lisle, “it is natural to defend one’s own; and even the high-minded knights of old, I suspect, had some little interest, if not property, in the ladies they fought for.”

“Oh, thou base slanderer of times too disinterested for modern comprehension!” cried Lady Rosamond, in a tone of mock-pathos, “unworthy of gilt spurs and damsel’s love! what penance will be too great to inflict on thee?”

“I will not say what I may be worthy of, but I will tell you what I will not bear,” said he, dexterously getting between her and the door, and that is being shut up here, as I perceive you intend doing: unless indeed, he added in a lower tone, you will bear me company?”

“You are in a very odd humour to-day,” said she, endeavouring to pass him, “will you not let me follow Gertrude?”

“Yes, if you can tell me why you consider

her so great a protection. I am sure you could not tremble more if Frankenstein's Monster were standing in your way. What have I done to terrify you so much?"

"I am not terrified, only provoked—this is such child's play!"—and she looked ready to cry. This was the first time *at home* that Sir Hubert had seen her betray any of the petulance he had formerly remarked and disliked in her manner. He instantly drew back, and said coldly—

"You are easily provoked, Lady Rosamond!"

The way was now open before her, but she did not profit by it. She stood motionless, her eyes fixed on the floor, and her very lips colourless. It was the first reproach he had ever addressed to her, and it stung her to the quick. On perceiving she did not advance, he looked at her, and was shocked at the change in her countenance.

"Good heavens! you are ill," said he, taking her hand. "What ails you?"

"I did not deserve it," said Lady Rosamond, speaking with difficulty, and without raising her eyes.

"Deserve what? hey, dearest Rosamond, what are you talking about?"

She was roused by his anxious tone, and putting her hand to her forehead, said faintly, "I hardly know: I believe I am giddy."

"Lean against me then, and do not faint. I shall be like the man in the play, and '*take it as a personal favour if you will not faint!*'"

Lady Rosamond smiled, and remained for a moment supported by Sir Hubert. As her agitation subsided, she awoke to a consciousness of the awkwardness of her situation, and immediately put an end to it by withdrawing herself from the arm that encircled her, and assuring him she was able to walk alone. When they joined Lady Avondale and Miss Saville, Lady Rosamond had recovered her colour, and no observation was made on her appearance. It was raining heavily, and De Lisle, unable to go out, and unwilling to read, sat listlessly on the sofa, watching the progress of Lady Rosamond's pattern.

"I think," said Gertrude, amused at his silent attention, "you will have learnt the tambour-stitch by luncheon—what do you say to trying a little now?"

"Willingly," said he, taking the frame from before its mistress.

"Oh, my poor work!" cried Lady Rosamond.

“ I promise not to touch it, if you will leave it too ?”

“ And why should I ? why is every one to be as idle as you ?”

“ I am idle only because I have nothing to do. Look what weather it is. Surely it is not strange that I should want to be amused.”

“ You are very unreasonable. I have devoted myself to you the whole morning. Must one think of nothing but you ?” and she looked up, unconscious that those soft blue eyes betrayed that she did not often think of any thing else.

It was the first time any thing approaching to the truth had presented itself to De Lisle. He could not quite believe it now, but the possibility was abundantly flattering. He was silent from surprise and emotion ; but when, unable to bear his looks, her eyes again drooped, he said in the low murmured accents of tenderness—

“ If it be too much trouble to talk to me, you can at least look at me.”

Her cheeks became dyed with crimson, and she feebly essayed to withdraw her trembling hand from his. Having succeeded at last, she called on Lady Avondale, or Miss Saville, to sing with her, since Sir Hubert insisted on

being entertained. Gertrude had a few sweet wild notes in her voice, that made a simple ballad very touching: she had the wisdom to confine herself to the style which suited her, and her stock was accordingly quickly exhausted; but Lady Rosamond's was much less limited.

Hers was the sort of voice so frequently heard in this musical age, where much good teaching and good taste unite to form a pleasing and useful singer—but cannot make an inspired one. She knew every song that every one else sang, and some favourites of her own that were no longer the fashion: she played at sight, and having a perfect ear, often took seconds to airs with which she was previously unacquainted. She was the soul of every musical entertainment, because she could do every thing that other people could not do, and, being quite above every sort of littleness, readily conceded to any one those brilliant songs that insure the most admiration to the performers. She cultivated music for her own pleasure, and was disposed to make it useful to others, but she was too proud to found on so frivolous an accomplishment any claim to attention, or to desire for a moment to share a species of ap-

plause that she considered the property of the actress who earns her bread by it.

She did not, however, under-rate genius and talent in any shape, and few things gave her so much pleasure as listening to Lady Avondale, whose voice, so peculiar in speaking as to excite at will almost every emotion, was in singing like what the imagination paints of seraphic sounds. It was almost profaning those rich and heavenly tones to apply them to any earthly feeling; and when employed in giving utterance to the sublime conceptions of Handel, the holy spell was so strong, as to leave on the heart of the listener an impression of awe that spiritualised rapture, and showed how far are such thoughts from the common excitement of common feelings—even as far as heaven is high above earth! When she had been visiting her father and De Lisle, she had declined singing. Lord Avondale's death was yet recent, and Feeling prompted that the voice he had so highly prized should be mute for a time. In her own family circle she had resumed her musical pursuits, and beyond it she never again intended to carry them. Early sorrow had disgusted her with the display she had been once accustomed to make of all her varied talents; and

she was conscious that *her* voice could not, like Lady Rosamond's, be heard and forgotten.

Sir Hubert himself, the oldest friend she and her family possessed, had never heard her but once—in that pavilion in her father's grounds, where she supposed herself alone. As he recollected that moment now, and listened to the same ravishing harmony, he forgot the time that had intervened, and she was again the Ellen he had so fondly loved. All Lady Rosamond's dormant enthusiasm was also awakened; and, as in love we feel nothing strongly that we do not desire to communicate to the object,—grief, that his influence may neutralize it, and enjoyment, that it may be felt two-fold,—her eyes naturally wandered to him, and she was startled at first on perceiving in his countenance something far beyond sympathy with her feelings.

Indeed, it was evident that of her he thought not at all. She guessed without difficulty that the music had carried him back to other times, and, being quite aware of the calm state of his present feelings for Lady Avondale, she was little alarmed at the association that occupied him for the moment. Besides, she was conscious that she herself was now the lady para-

mount ; and though she could not guess by what process any man could learn to detach himself from Lady Avondale, she was too well satisfied with the fact, to give herself any great trouble to understand how it came about. She bent forward to him, and said in an under-tone, “ Dreamer, awake ! or shall I sing you ‘ *On revient toujours à ses premiers amours.* ’ ”

He turned his head round quickly at this address, and, as he gazed on the graceful Hebe before him, and her playful and arch expression of countenance, he could not choose but smile ; yet he sighed also, and the sigh sounded heavier and more earnest than the smile : at least, Lady Rosamond thought so, and regretted having broken his vision. He guessed her feelings, and, fearing she might attach too much importance to this reversion of his fancy and imagination, he said, “ There are some dreams of youth it is always pleasing to recal, but those are not to be pitied who awake to such sweet realities ; ” and he kissed the fair hand that lingered on the harp-strings. The action was unperceived by the rest of the party, but to judge from Lady Rosamond’s blushes, had not been unfelt by her.

## CHAPTER XII.

IT was the evening of this very day, on which De Lisle first acknowledged to himself, that it would suit him better to marry the adopted child of Ellen, than Ellen herself: when, for the first time, he believed his hand would not be as negligently accepted by the younger lady as it had been by Lady Avondale:—that on retiring to rest, the brightness of the moon induced him to open his window. The damp and melancholy day they had had, rendered the pure clear light of the silver planet a more than usually gratifying spectacle, and, attracted by its beauty, Sir Hubert stood a few seconds at his open window to enjoy it. As he looked over a pretty flower-garden, that opened into the Park, he thought he saw two figures moving in the shade. They presently emerged into broader light, and he could dis-

tinctly see that one was a female—that it was Lady Rosamond, though a dark shawl nearly concealed her slight figure. Who could be her companion? He gazed earnestly. It was a tall man in a loose great coat, but whether young or old he could not discover, for his head was inclined downwards, and shaded by a broad hat.

The two figures glided in the most noiseless manner through the open space, and mounted by a flight of steps to the wide terrace that ran under the drawing-room windows. De Lisle bent forward to ascertain whether they entered the house, but this appeared to form no part of their intention. They merely walked up and down the terrace, and their slow measured steps on the pavement, and at times the low, and to his fancy, sad tones, in which they discoursed, alone broke the silence of that still calm night. He remained at his post, fascinated rather than curious, for he was aware that the moon would grow no brighter, and therefore he should distinguish no more than he now did.

The height of his window from the terrace prevented his hearing any part of the conversation; and indeed, could he have done so, a mere instinctive feeling of what is honourable

would have impelled him to retreat. This nocturnal conversation had lasted now above an hour. The deep-toned clock over the stables had struck two, and been answered almost immediately by a more distant one from the church. It appeared to surprise the walkers, to judge from the sudden break in their monotonous step. They stood still for a moment, and De Lisle thought Lady Rosamond embraced the dark figure beside her. It could not be; he was sure it could not be: he looked again—her white veil streamed over the shoulder and back of her companion, and the head from which it hung evidently rested against the stranger!

In the next moment he had leaped the terrace, and looking back at her, Sir Hubert had a view of his uplifted face. It was dark and pale, but evidently young, very young; and that slight stooping figure, betokening neither strength nor animation, had been bent by sickness or sorrow, but not by time. This thought glanced across De Lisle's mind, but could not be said to have rested there; for all his faculties were absorbed in painful wonder and confused dreamings. He with difficulty restored something of order to his thoughts. The conduct

of Lady Rosamond, mysterious and imprudent in any one, was unpardonable in her, and was either a most surprising instance of inconsistency, being unlike both her virtues and her defects; or else she was a compound of art and falsehood, and her cold and haughty manners were but the veil which concealed a disposition more than generally faulty. The consciousness of weakness often inspires cowardice; and women, who usually are weak, are at times led into clandestine measures from which their better principles revolt, because they have not courage to do openly what in doubtful cases had always better not be done at all.

But this excuse would not exonerate Lady Rosamond. Who controlled her? who would object to her seeing whom she would, whether alone or in company? She was not driven to interviews in the dead of night, by the pale light of the moon; it was a voluntary action: and as mystery is the sign of guilt, De Lisle thought himself justified in concluding she favoured the suit of some lowborn lover, whom she was ashamed to present to her friends, independent as she was. He remembered he had set out by not liking her, and he applauded the sure instinct of first impressions. He blushed

to think he had latterly been her dupe. He was at first at a loss to see the motive for the encouragement she had given him: to be sure, this amounted to little more than silence, and the betraying no anger at what she evidently suffered from no one else: but with her general tone of manner, this was a great deal, and could never have been unintentional.

Distrust, never foreign to his nature, seized on him with a strength proportioned to his mortification and disappointment, and, giving the reins to his imagination, he ended by believing she could have had but one object, the detaching him from Lady Avondale; this she had effected. That she could not have done so without the aid of weakness and versatility in himself, was plain enough; but that reflection did not harmonize his feelings, or inspire more charity towards her.

“Ellen did well,” thought he, “to accept me conditionally. She loves me from long habit, a friendly temper, and a notion that I have been serviceable to her family; but she distrusted my steadiness, and suffered me to prove to myself how right she was. But this Rosamond, this fair, pure, retiring girl, whose dignity and pride seemed wounded by the slightest, most

harmless familiarity,—she can receive a lover alone, in the silent shades of night, and not only permit but bestow caresses! It is enough; I will never more believe in the virtue of women, since so young a creature is but the greater hypocrite. Even Ellen herself is virtuous because she is no longer tempted. When passion spoke with the voice of Avondale, she was little better than his mistress; and though he was a brute to desert her, she was a fool to trust him.”

Suspicion thus festering in the wounded feelings of Sir Hubert, (for his pride and vanity were stung as well as his heart,) he excepted nothing from his censure, and involved all alike, those he loved and those he despised, in one tide of bitterness. In spite, however, of the ferment in his blood, he slept; for he had passed the age when love or perfidy has power to scare away sleep entirely; but his dreams became “thick coming fancies of many an indefinite but oppressive evil,” that broke his repose, and caused him to awake unrefreshed. His first thought was what his last had been, that he would depart that day. His horses (he had driven himself hither in a curricule) wanted shoeing, the blacksmith was not at hand, and it was evident his servant

thought the next day would do as well. After a moment's reflection he thought so too. Why should he fly Lady Rosamond, who was henceforth harmless, since she could no longer be trusted? To leave Lady Avondale abruptly too was needless and absurd. It was but one day more, and though it would differ widely from those that preceded it, he did not know that he would not willingly purchase, at some pain to himself, the pleasure of showing to Lady Rosamond that her power was at an end.

The desire of revenge does not exist where there is complete indifference. De Lisle knew this, but these were early days, and he thought it fair some little excitement should remain, on the utter annihilation of feelings he now perceived had been stronger than hitherto he had been aware of. It was late when he entered the breakfast-room, and Lady Rosamond turned round a radiant face on which some laughing reproach appeared expressed; but the words died on her lips, the smile faded rapidly away, on meeting the cold glance and gloomy brow of him she was about to greet. Her joyous spirits thus unexpectedly checked, she remained silent and absent, the weight of

some mysterious evil pressing her down, which she could not understand, but seemed to wait patiently to have explained. Lady Avondale saw that something was wrong, but fearing to aggravate by appearing to notice it, she almost entirely confined her conversation to Miss Saville.

After breakfast Lady Rosamond moved mechanically to the window; it seemed to her that Sir Hubert must follow her, and that she would learn why he looked so unlike himself. But he continued leaning against the mantelpiece with the newspaper in his hand, though it did not seem to her that he was really reading. She followed Gertrude into the garden, and, gathering some jessamine, re-entered the room and presented it to Lady Avondale.

“Are you ill?” said she, as she passed De Lisle. He raised his eyes quickly, and meeting her look of earnest interest, they flashed with indignant fire, as withdrawing them instantly he coldly replied, that he never was better.

“Indeed Hubert!” said Lady Avondale, “you look headachy and as if you had rested ill; you are the worse of being confined to the house the whole of yesterday. I wish you would

take your horse and gallop back a little colour to your cheek and lustre to your eye."

"I cannot say I need the remedy," replied De Lisle; "yet, as it is not an unpleasant one, I might have taken it had it been possible; but I have sent my horses to get shod preparatory to their journey."

"Do you leave us so soon?"

"So soon, my dear Ellen? I am very much flattered that you should not be weary of me, for I think I have been living more in your house lately than in my own. Do you think of visiting General Parry this summer? You know you must visit Jane at my house, for the vicarage is growing too small for her own family."

"So indeed it appears," returned Lady Avondale with a smile; "but that is no distress to me, who never had any taste for vicarages, and would much prefer seeing my sister in your comfortable mansion. My plans, however, depend entirely on my sons. I have as yet no guess of how they mean to dispose of themselves this summer, but I conclude they will go to town; and if they take a comfortable house and seem to wish for me, perhaps I may go up for six weeks. I am a little weary of town

myself, and Rosamond prefers the country.”  
“ I can imagine so,” thought De Lisle, “ there is here metal more attractive ;” but he did not speak, and Lady Avondale continued : “ Since you must be off to-morrow, I wish you would come with me now and fix upon the site of that summer-house of which you sent me the plan. I will go and fetch my bonnet.”

Sir Hubert readily agreed, and left the room at the same moment for his hat. Lady Rosamond remained standing where they had left her. Surprised and indignant she had a right to feel; but she was more nearly touched than that. Why De Lisle should seem so devoted to her yesterday, and, without explanation or offence, should be more than indifferent to her to-day, was a mystery; it was also an insult. “ Can I have been weak enough,” thought she, “ to allow him to see that his apparent affection gave me too much pleasure? Does he fear to commit himself? *that* he has done already, and he must know it. Does he shrink from marriage, and expect to be *persecuted*? If he waits till I, or any of my friends, hint at what he ought to do, he may wait long, and might have remained in safety here; but if *he* thinks otherwise, 'tis well!” But though she repeated

this last word frequently to herself, tears of pride and wounded tenderness bathed her face, and seemed to contradict its obvious meaning. Dashing them indignantly off, she hastened to join Miss Saville in the garden.

“ They mounted together the steps leading to the terrace, and met Lady Avondale and her companion descending them. While the former stopped to give some commission to Lady Rosamond, the gardener opened the gate into the Park, and a very large and handsome dog, of the setter kind, rushed into the garden, and made its way to the ladies. Miss Saville fancied it was mad, and, springing up the steps, took refuge in the drawing-room. Lady Avondale even drew back, and De Lisle raised his umbrella. The dog, however, seemed little inclined to notice them: after bestowing a hasty caress on Lady Rosamond, it ran along the terrace, with its nose to the ground, evidently seeking some one.

“ Poor thing !” said Lady Avondale, “ it has lost its master !”

“ He has a good nose,” said De Lisle, following the animal with his eye, “ for he follows every step;” and he looked full at Lady Rosamond as he spoke.

A sudden thought seemed to flash across her, and she looked instantly towards his window. He could not help savagely enjoying her supposed confusion, and said, as Lady Avondale turned from them to encourage the dog,

“Perhaps he accompanied his master last night?”

Lady Rosamond turned her clear blue eyes full on De Lisle, with a look—how unlike those she had hitherto given him!—calmly contemptuous, while she answered rather in a tone of interrogatory than justification, “And if he did?”

“As your Ladyship would observe,” he added with bitterness, “it is altogether no business of mine. I ought to apologize for my impertinence; but I have been so spoiled of late, I take a good while awakening from the Fool’s Paradise wherein I had lulled myself to sleep:” and he bowed and passed on.

“This is too much!” thought Lady Rosamond: “to doubt me for a moment was what I did not deserve; but so readily to accommodate his feelings to a perfect belief in my worthlessness! This man has never loved me, nor is he worthy that I should have loved him”—and for the moment at least, she felt it would

no longer be so hard a matter to detach herself from him.

There was company to dinner, and among them Sir Noel Elliot and his mother. As long as Lady Rosamond continued single, Lady Elliot flattered herself all hope of gaining her for a daughter-in-law was not at an end; she therefore caressed and courted her, much to the annoyance of the young lady, who guessed what it all tended to, and retained her former opinion on the matter as decidedly as ever. De Lisle had never met the gentleman before, and he now scrutinized his appearance more than was his custom, remembering that Lady Rosamond had mentioned his age as one of the reasons why she had never thought of falling in love with him. It did not appear to Sir Hubert that he could be much older than himself, and another pang at having been so easily duped was inflicted on his vanity.

He had flattered himself too, that if he could find any gentlemanlike way of letting Lady Rosamond know his altered feelings, she would be for a moment annoyed at the loss of her influence. "She loves to rule, if she loves nothing else," thought he; "and to sink so entirely in the good opinion of one, of whose good opinion

she seemed proud, cannot be quite painless." It would seem, however, that it was so; and somehow or other he could not shake off the feeling of being himself in disgrace, and given up by her, instead of being the person who had given her up.

There was infinite talent in this, and he admired it as art; but it inspired him every moment with feelings of more inveterate hostility against her. In the evening Lady Elliot was so urgent with Lady Rosamond to sit down to her harp that she was obliged to comply, though feeling at the moment little tuned to harmony. The most striking part of Lady Rosamond's beauty was her perfect symmetry, and the grace and elegance of all her motions. In other respects she was variable: one day looking colourless and inanimate, and the next fresh and lovely. She happened that evening to be in particular good looks; and when she seated herself at her harp, it was difficult to gaze on her with any sentiment short of the liveliest admiration.

She was dressed in lavender-coloured gauze, that suited the delicacy of her complexion: a row of pearls round her throat that had belonged to her mother; a wreath of natural ivy

confining her luxuriant hair; a pair of earrings, handsomely set, of pearls and emeralds, that had been a gift of the late Lord Avondale, and some gold bracelets on her arm, which she took off when she began to play, and which Sir Noel kept possession of with a kind of triumphant air while the music lasted. When it had ceased, he seemed soliciting permission to clasp them on again.

De Lisle did not hear what was said, but he saw her take them gravely from him, and with a careless, haughty air fling them into an open basket that stood on one of the tables, and seemed appropriated to every sort of litter. Sir Hubert felt that almost any other woman in her situation would have yielded to a little flirtation with one person, to keep her out of the way of another, and to show to that other that his attentions were not necessary. He had seen this done a thousand times; and while he had blamed it as weak, he had pardoned it as natural. But Lady Rosamond, it seemed, was not to be piqued into any levity of conduct. He could not but acknowledge the good taste and *tact* that seemed to guide her in public at least, and he regretted that it should be mere outward show.

Thus musing he approached the window, and holding aside the muslin curtain, which alone was drawn, fixed his eyes on the terrace, on which the moon already shone. Presently he thought he saw some one cross the path: he looked again; it was the figure of the night before. Yielding to the impulse of the moment, he called to Lady Rosamond; she approached immediately.

“Look!” said he, in a low tone of bitter sarcasm, “you are wanted.”

She followed the direction of his hand, and answering with simplicity, and apparently heedless of the accent in which he spoke,

“So I perceive.” She opened the French window, closed it on De Lisle, and as she sprang lightly down the steps, with her head and bosom uncovered, he could not, spite of his ire, but confess that she looked like a creature of light in the surrounding gloom. How or where she met the person who awaited her, he could not distinguish; and he remained with his eyes still fixed on the spot where she had vanished, when he heard her voice behind him. She had returned another way, and no one had missed her.

As soon as Lady Elliot had left them, (she

was the only female of their party,) Miss Saville took up a book, and Lady Rosamond sat down to work. Lady Avondale continued talking to the gentlemen, till one by one they fell off. As the last left the room, Lady Rosamond inquired of Gertrude what she was reading?

“Only Britannicus,” replied the young lady.

“Only! my dear,” said her friend; “did you think I meant to accuse you of any deeper study in a room full of talking people? I envy you though, if it can interest you.”

“It does interest me,” said Miss Saville, “and why should it not? Britannicus is young, amiable, and unfortunate; and there is some fine poetry too.”

“Yes; the speech Agrippine makes to Nero is very fine, but I don’t think your hero says much worth remembering.”

“Oh! you forget one fine line:

‘ Mais cette defiance

Est toujours d’un grand cœur la dernière science.’ ”

“True, that *is* a fine line standing singly; but it has little effect in his mouth, and so applied. To distrust those we have loved, and had reason to confide in,” she continued with more animation than the subject seemed to require, “is

base as well as cruel ; but there is no greatness of mind in rashly confiding in the unprincipled and malevolent. What is left for those we esteem, if we pay those we despise in the same coin ?”

“ It was amiable, I think, to try to like Nero : remember, he was his brother, and had not shown himself then the monster he afterwards became.”

“ Not to the world ; but the flower that bore such full fruit afterwards, must have been visible to his family in early times.”

“ Well, I am sorry for poor Britannicus, and Junie too.”

“ After that,” said Lady Rosamond, “ I have nothing more to say ! What sugar-and-water thing will you not be sorry for, if you can care for poor Junie, and her monotonous anger, and her scared heroism !”

“ Come, my dear Miss Saville,” said Lady Avondale, “ you shall defend Junie and Racine to-morrow : it is too late to throw down your gauntlet now in their favour.”

De Lisle held open the door as they left the room, and all the ladies bowed,—Lady Avondale with a kind good-night, Miss Saville with a smile, and Lady Rosamond with a look of polite and haughty indifference.

## CHAPTER XIII.

SIR HUBERT came down earlier than usual the next morning, intending to depart immediately after breakfast. He found only Lady Avondale and Miss Saville, and, almost hoping he should not see Lady Rosamond, he asked if it were too early for her to make her appearance?

“Oh no!” replied Lady Avondale; “nothing is too early for her; and besides, this is a very reasonable hour. She is gone to meet her brother, who has promised to breakfast with me; but whether he will have courage to do so when it comes to the point, I will not pretend to assert.”

“Her brother!” repeated De Lisle, drawing a long breath; “why I thought you told me she had never seen Lord Alvanley?”

“Lord Merrion had an elder son, you know.

He was sent to India, where he was getting on well ; for Providence seems to have equalized her gifts in this, as in many other cases ; and Trevannon has been given the talents denied to his wealthy and titled brother. Ill health obliged him to come home, and bad spirits are combining, I fear, to sink him to the grave. He has been our neighbour some time, it seems ; but Rosamond, at his request, did not name it to me till Eveleyn and Charles had left us,—so nervously afraid is he of being dragged into company.”

She had hardly finished speaking when Lady Rosamond entered, followed by the nocturnal figure that had occupied so much of Sir Hubert's thoughts. He cast an imploring glance at her, but she appeared not to observe it, and he perceived she had resented his conduct too deeply even to betray a little natural triumph when Mr. Trevannon was presented to him. “It is all over, I see,” thought he ; “she despises a suspicious temper, and indeed I thought I had surmounted the defect, only, I suppose, because nothing occurred to bring it forward. This is the way I reform, and the way I am punished for it !” He sighed deeply, and continued musing for a moment ; then sud-

denly roused himself to pay attention to the young stranger, as a kind of *amende honorable* to his half-sister.

Trevannon was evidently languid and suffering; but though exertion appeared out of the question, he replied to De Lisle with mild courtesy; and as the latter persevered in trying all topics, in hopes at last of meeting with one that might be interesting, the invalid yielded to the charm of his conversation, and becoming gradually more animated, light shone in his sunken eye, a faint colour visited his hollow cheek, his frame became more erect, and he was altogether a different person from the pallid, feeble figure who had followed Lady Rosamond into the room. Lady Avondale seemed reluctant to break the spell by moving from the breakfast-table; but at last Sir Hubert's servant, impatient at the non-appearance of his master, sent word the carriage was ready.

“If it were at the devil too,” said De Lisle impatiently, “it would be quite as well; but I suppose I must go. My dearest Ellen! my pretty little Gertrude! God bless you both! Mr. Trevannon, if you are travelling for your health, I wish I could prevail on you to try the air of my county. Lady Avondale will tell

you how pure and wholesome it is; and that mine being a bachelor's house, you may feel if you like, there, as sociable as Diogenes in his tub."

The invalid could not but shake the hand extended to him, regretting in some very joyless tones that his speedy return to India would prevent his availing himself of the invitation. The whole party were now standing,—Lady Rosamond a little apart from the others, throwing out crumbs to the birds from the window. With a desperate fit of resolution he went up to her.

"For you," he said, in a low and mournful tone, that contrasted strangely with the animation of his former accents, "there is nothing, for nothing I could say would you listen to. I know it: I acknowledge the justice of your conduct."

"And the injustice of your own; now it is *proved* to you, I imagine?" said Lady Rosamond coldly. "It is very well: I desire no excuses, and bear no malice. Fare you well!" and she made a motion to pass him. He did not venture to detain her, but he uttered her name in such a piercing tone of grief and intreaty, that she stopped involuntarily.

“Have you no pardon,” he said, “for acknowledged and repented sins; no mercy for frailties you do not understand; no compassion for sorrow you cannot guess at?”

“I can say no more,” she said, keeping her eyes steadfastly fixed on the floor, as if she feared her resolution might give way if she looked at him,—“I can but say I will dismiss all this from my mind.”

“*All!* That is, my mad jealousy together with the love that gave rise to it?”

“If it be sometimes gratifying to be loved,” replied Lady Rosamond with increasing coldness, “it is always necessary to be trusted.”

“And yet, perhaps, if I had loved you less I had trusted you more. If I had been calmer, I should have reasoned better and suffered less.”

“I am not responsible,” she continued, “for sufferings of your own creation. Although I do not honour a distrustful temper, I might more readily have pardoned suspicions of any other sort; and perhaps I might have pardoned even them to any one else—but *you.*”

She stopped, and, he thought, looked on him more in sorrow than in anger. Still it wounded him deeply: he bowed his head; and while the colour deepened on his cheek, and the

tear could with difficulty be kept out of his eye, he said in faltering accents, "Is it generous, Rosamond, to break a bruised reed?"

"You do not understand me if you think I wish to add to any regret you may feel. We have mistaken one another, that is all; it need not prevent our parting good friends;" and she held out her hand to him.

"I thank you," he said, bowing low, but without touching it: "I would gladly receive the pledge of friendship, did I not know I had forfeited yours; of pardon, did not I see I am unforgiven."

"What is it you expect of me?" asked Lady Rosamond.

"Nothing!" he replied impetuously—"nothing," he repeated more gloomily.

There was a long pause, during which the emotion of both parties rather increased than diminished. At last he said abruptly, as fearing almost to trust his voice,

"Lady Rosamond, two days ago I did not think to bid you adieu in this manner: but I have deserved it: I will not complain." He bowed again, and turned from her.

He was surprised to find no one in the room but themselves; nor was Lady Rosamond less

so. It seemed as if the absence of every other person had removed some of the constraint under which she laboured to keep her feelings. She felt as if she had not courage to remain another moment alone with De Lisle, that she must burst into tears, or perhaps implore in her turn to be forgiven! She murmured an indistinct adieu, and hastily passed him. He followed her to the door, and though he said nothing to stop her, the fear that he might do so, the nervous agitation produced by his departure under such circumstances, made her tremble so excessively that she was unable to open the door.

Ashamed and provoked, her courage entirely deserted her, and she sat down on the nearest chair, and covered her face with her hands. She could not, however, prevent the tears from trickling through her spread fingers; and De Lisle, pained, but yet more gratified, at sight of her emotion, forgot that a moment ago the summit of his ambition had been a generous pardon, and now boldly pleaded for the love that insured it. In such a moment of agitation—on the very brink, too, of his departure, it was not likely he should plead in vain. He had an interest of too long standing in the heart he

now wished to secure to himself, not to induce her to overlook conduct so bitterly repented of, and which, she fondly hoped, could never be repeated, after she had confessed how long he had been beloved.

“And must I go to-day?” said Sir Hubert, some time after, when Lady Rosamond reminded him of the hour.

“I think,” she replied, “it will be rather absurd if you do not; but you know you may return when you will.”

“Perchance I might will to return to-morrow, which would be rather more absurd than staying to-day. However, it is true that the sooner I go the sooner I can return and take you away with me.”

“I did not quite mean that,” said the young lady in some confusion.

“It is not my fault if you are caught in your own trap,” replied De Lisle with a smile. “It is very well at your age to talk of waiting, but at mine there is no time to be lost. I shall go to town directly, and, if you wish it, I will see Lord Merrion.”

“Certainly,” she replied, “I should wish you to pay my father all possible attention; but as Lady Merrion, I rejoice to say, is not *my*

mother, there can be no occasion for your cultivating the whole family, as Villars has done out of compliment to Elizabeth.”

“ You do not appear to have suffered your prejudice against the *parvenue* Countess to have interfered with your regard for Trevannon or Lady Elizabeth. Why should you shrink so much from the others ?”

“ Not, I think, as a matter of prejudice, but of principle. Because my father marries my maid, I do not feel bound to associate with her, which I must do if I sought out the children under her roof. There is no occasion for it either, as they want nothing of me ; and Alvanley, if he had chosen it, might have sought me out. Elizabeth, brought up from home, and early taken into good company, is upon a very different footing from girls educated by Lady Merrion and living with her ; and as for poor Trevannon, I knew and loved him as a boy, before I was aware his situation in life would be a jot worse than my own. He is but lately returned home ; he has been treated with much heartlessness and neglect by his parents ; and I think he hardly needed that to break the little energy that illness and so enervating a climate have left him.”

“Do not look so uneasy, my dearest Rosamond, about him. Trust me, he is merely moped. Did you not see how he roused this morning only? If he can remain here till he has recovered a little strength, youth and resolution will bear him through some years in India, which I do not consider an unhealthy climate by any means.”

“I hope you are right; and now will you go, for your poor horses must be weary of waiting?”

“They will have the less distance to go to-day, so I think they need not be pitied. That is Lady Avondale’s step; will you call her in for a moment?”

Lady Rosamond did so, and seemed preparing to make her own escape; but that De Lisle would not suffer, and briefly explaining their present situation to Lady Avondale, implored her to decide on living with them altogether.

“A great temptation, I confess,” said that lady, kissing the blushing cheek of her *élève*, and cordially returning the pressure of Sir Hubert’s hand; “but though I love you both, I also love Eveleyn and Charles, who, until they marry, I reckon, are in greater want of my

household talents than you and Rosamond can be. No, my dear Hubert ! it is a pretty plan, and a kind plan, but it would not suit me ; and even should I move at any future time into your neighbourhood, which is not impossible, it would be to a house of my own : however, I will come and visit you as often as you will."

Sir Hubert was really disappointed, and looked so much so, that Lady Rosamond could not bring herself to regret Lady Avondale's refusal as much as she might otherwise have done. Long after De Lisle had left them, the two ladies continued conversing together ; and it was nearly dinner-time before either of them remembered that Trevannon, after having been so long and so earnestly pressed to join their party, had been left all day to the society of Miss Saville, who was a perfect stranger to him. When Lady Rosamond joined them, however, she did not think either looked disposed to complain of their lot ; and when she explained the apparent neglect, by simply stating the fact, that she was about to become the wife of De Lisle, the satisfaction expressed by her brother and her friend was earnest and sincere.

"That is all quite right," exclaimed Gertrude : "I always thought Sir Hubert was the

only person who could deserve you, and he indeed deserves every thing."

"I shall not then," said Trevannon as earnestly, though more quietly, "quit England without one pleasurable emotion! I shall leave the only being for whom I am interested in my native land, in good hands, and with every prospect of being as happy as is permitted here."

"Say not the *only one*, my brother!" said Rosamond mildly; "what has Elizabeth done to forfeit her place in your regard? Why would you wipe out all memory of your early attachment to Mrs. Trevannon and to Lady Avondale? Why should you think they are uninterested for you? And if they are not so, is it not ungrateful to think of them with indifference!"

"I think of no one, my dear Rosamond," sadly replied Trevannon, "who has ever shown me kindness, with positive indifference. Elizabeth is gentle and amiable: she received me cordially, which was more than any of her brothers or her sisters did; but her mind was full of Villars, and she forgot my very existence even while I stood before her. When the broad ocean separates us, think you I shall be remembered?"

“Yes, most assuredly; with all the warmth of a most affectionate disposition, and the constancy of a steady temper! You are too susceptible, my dear Trevannon, and consequently unjust. You make no allowance for her situation. She had suffered long and silently:—when she least expected it her prospects changed. Could she at such a moment think of any thing but her lover?—or do you think, if you were to fall in love, I should expect you to devote all your thoughts to me; or fear that I was forgotten, because livelier feelings were paramount for the time?”

“Ask me not what I should do in a situation wherein I can never be placed. What could love be to me but a pang the more? That would be an evil of my own seeking, and I have enough without.”

“Really, Trevannon,” said Lady Avondale, who had just joined them, and was grieved at the despondency of his tone, “you are in love with misery as it is; and I think it would be an improvement to change the object of your attachment. There is Miss Saville wondering why you should not fall in love, as well as your neighbours.”

“Miss Saville,” replied Trevannon, trying to

smile, "does not know how little temptation we Asiatics have to be sentimental."

"To be sure," said Gertrude laughing, "I can fancy that feeling being roasted out at Calcutta; dying at once of suffocation. I have always understood shady groves and purling streams to be requisites to a lover—though upon what principle I cannot exactly say."

"That's not the principal distress, though I grant it may be one; but there is such a thing as a paucity of objects."

"That, assuredly, is not among our European grievances: therefore, I should recommend your falling in love here, as Lady Avondale seems to think it would be an advisable measure, where you cannot complain of a want of variety."

"True, I might do such a thing for pastime: but what would become of me if it grew serious, and I had to leave my lady love?"

"You could take her with you, I suppose."

"Perhaps she would not go."

"Then she would not be worth regretting."

"Is it so small a matter, in your estimation, to sacrifice home, friends, relatives, and perhaps health?"

"Small! no:—but sacrifice is the system of

existence, and all sacrifices are light when made for those we love."

"So then," said Trevannon, faintly smiling, "I may hope one of these days to see you accompany your husband to India."

"Oh, I am out of the question!"

"So you are merely generous for other people! That is a cheap way."

"The only rational way, as my brother would say; and, without doubt, the one most frequently adopted."

The conversation dropped here, and was not again renewed.

## CHAPTER XIV.

MEANTIME Lady James Saville continued seriously uneasy about her youngest daughter. Anne did not, it is true, shrink from the gaiety that surrounded her. She was the first to promote amusement, the last to withdraw from it. Her eye sparkled and her cheek glowed with health and animation, and her ready laugh exhilarated all who heard it—all but her mother. In her anxious and attentive ear it sounded less jocund than heretofore ; and her careless, almost flighty manner, though agreeable to many, as seeming more natural than that of her companions, was painful to one who saw in it rather the excitement of constitutional high spirits, than the overflowings of a joyous heart. Lady James prolonged her visit—she even made an excursion to the sea-side, and half determined not to return to the Priory, fearful of awaken-

ing recollections in her daughter's mind, she wished obliterated.

But it was necessary to take Gertrude home ; and though Lady Avondale offered to keep her until after Lady Rosamond's marriage, when she could be conveyed in safety to her mother, that period seemed so remote, or at any rate so indefinite, Lady James could not reconcile herself to so long a separation. Having therefore ascertained that Lord Avondale and his brother were still absent, she made up her mind, though reluctantly, to call for her eldest daughter. She had delayed it the more willingly, perceiving from Gertrude's letters that she was well and happy at the Priory, and seemed perfectly content to remain where she was. Lady James, who knew there was no company there in the absence of the young Lord, was rejoiced to think her daughter was profiting by the society of women superior as Lady Avondale and her adopted daughter. Of the existence of Trevannon she was ignorant—still less did she suppose he was an inmate at the Priory. Miss Saville had never mentioned him ; not from any purpose of concealment, but because in the first place it was matter of no moment to herself, and was therefore forgotten,—and when some

time afterwards she was on the point of quoting something he had said, it appeared to her that her mother would think the observation less important than she had done.

Perhaps the first symptom of decided predilection is that jealous dread lest others may not think as highly of the object of our admiration as we ourselves do. We would rather deny ourselves the pleasure of praising, than have our eulogy suspected of blind partiality. "After all," thought Miss Saville, excusing herself to herself, as she refrained from writing Trevannon's name, "my mother does not know him—she will not care to hear about him; at any rate, his sister or Lady Avondale, both of whom write to her, can mention him more properly than I can." This notion of propriety was reserved for him alone. Every other visitor, however casual, was spoken of in his turn, and it did not strike Gertrude that Lady James did not know them, and was not likely to care much about them. She had a quiet reflecting turn of mind; but she was very young, and accordingly inexperienced.

It is not at that age that we begin to calculate on the progress of feeling. We suppose it to be stationary, and seldom, therefore, guard

against what is innocent and pleasurable to-day for fear it may be otherwise to-morrow. By this imprudence we gain some momentary enjoyment, and purchase much future suffering. Miss Saville had so little the clue to her own feelings, she wondered why her mother's letter, fixing the day when she would call for her, should so much depress her spirits. She read it over again, to see if it arose from any thing Lady James said ; but she could fix on nothing. There was little written, indeed, but that little was affectionate and cheerful.

“ Did Lady James desire you to learn her letter by heart, my dear Gertrude ?” asked Lady Rosamond, on perceiving her standing in the window, lost in thought, with the open letter in her hand.

“ Had that been my task,” replied Miss Saville with a forced smile, “ you see it would not have been a long one ;” and she showed her the letter.

Lady Rosamond hastily glanced her eye over it, and said, “ Well, I shall be very glad to see Lady James and Anne, but I think they are in a great hurry to carry you away. They might surely stay longer. Do pray write your mother word Charles will not be home for long, so

there is no danger—unless the air of the Priory be contagious. You have not found it so, I hope?”

“Who? I?” cried Miss Saville, colouring more deeply than Lady Rosamond expected, “I have no fault to find with the air.”

“Well then, assure her you have neither lost your heart to the pet-owl in the tower, nor to my melancholy brother here, who might make a good companion to the dismal bird, and therefore there can be no reason for whisking you out of harm’s way in such a moment; or stay, I will get Lady Avondale to write, which may be more effectual,”—and Lady Rosamond left the room for that purpose. There was a dead silence of some minutes, which Trevannon seemed little disposed to break, otherwise than by an occasional sigh. It was uncomfortable to Miss Saville, and, to put an end to it, she said,

“I hope you will like my sister—she is very gay and pretty.”

“I do not doubt it,” he replied, “but it would avail me little. Fair visions float by me to be dissolved in air. We pursue not the same track, and it is idle to meet those with whom I must so soon part for ever.”

“For ever! Why you surely do not mean to live for ever in that odious India?”

“I may live there but a short space, and yet all my life.”

“Of course we know that life is not certain; but, with all your sick fancies, you may survive me yet.”

“God forbid!” said Trevannon.

“Nay, if you are bent on dying, there is nothing to be said against it—only, for my own part, I would rather look forward to seeing you return some ten or dozen years hence.”

“Ten or a dozen years! At our age it is the best part of life.”

“Maybe; but they will pass nevertheless.”

“And if they do pass—and if I return independent—then Gertrude!”—He paused—the momentary colour forsook his cheek—he dropped the hand he had almost unconsciously seized, and moved slowly away.

He sought his sister. “Rosamond,” he said, “will you apologize to Lady Avondale for my abrupt departure? I must return this day to the lodging from whence you seduced me. It would have been well, had I never left it.”

“Trevannon, what new fancy is this? It was but yesterday I was rejoicing in your im-

proved looks and spirits. What can have happened to make you uncomfortable here?"

"Nothing more than that I am too well here. I can no longer trust myself. In short, it is enough that I can suffer alone, but will not dishonourably seek to entangle others in the web of my ill fortune."

"Will you be a little less mysterious, my dear brother, for I hear what you say as through my sleep?"

"It is I that have been asleep; but I am awake now, and will see her no more."

Still Lady Rosamond would have been at a loss to comprehend him, had she not perceived him shrink back as he uttered the last words, and, following the direction of his eye, perceived it was Miss Saville who was coming towards them. They were in a conservatory, and Trevannon was standing behind some large orange-trees, that concealed him from Gertrude, who did not come in, but merely asked Lady Rosamond if she would walk.

"If you go to the avenue, my dear, I will overtake you in less than ten minutes," replied that lady, who, turning to her brother when Miss Saville was out of hearing, asked if he had taken leave of her.

“How could you suspect me of such a piece of absurdity?” he answered eagerly. “Those who distrust themselves, do not put themselves in the way of danger.”

“May I ask how Gertrude would be the worse for knowing your regard for her?”

“You will think my answer a vain one; but if she should care for me, would it be fair on my part to seek to increase that regard, since, situated as I am, it could have no possible result.”

“I do not say the attachment is wise on your part, or would be prudent on her’s. I wish it had not taken place; but that is not now the question. We must set out, in reasoning, always from the actual state of things. It is my opinion that your susceptible temper is aggravating the evil. Doubt and uncertainty are very harassing things. You can put an end to that state, by ascertaining at once whether Miss Saville cares for you only as *my* brother, or whether she loves you for yourself. In the first case you will leave England with the less regret; in the second you would think of your return with more pleasure.”

“You may possibly be right, as far as I am

concerned ; but you are sacrificing your friend's peace to mine by this advice. I could not be selfish enough to seek to bind her by an engagement, that for years at least could not be fulfilled. What right have I to waste her youth and destroy her fair prospects by my ill-omened passion ?”

“ We are arguing a matter of feeling, not of right. I am fully aware that, for the next half-dozen years, the chances are Miss Saville might marry much better ; but it is, after all, a chance. Supposing during that time she liked none of those who liked her, it is probable that newer faces would withdraw the attention her youth had till then claimed and received. She is well born, but she has no powerful connexions : she has a comfortable home while her mother lives, but after that, will have but a bare subsistence. She has nothing remarkable about her, and is just the sort of girl to be very much liked, and yet overlooked by men for more showy persons, every way her inferiors. This, however, is mere speculation ; but what is quite certain is, that she is too rational to hamper herself by engagements that cannot please Lady James, unless impelled by a strong attachment ; and in

that case, I leave you to judge whether your abrupt desertion would not be harder to bear than mere delay."

"Delay is a gentle word for the time that must elapse. Even supposing it passed, and Gertrude's youth and freshness worn away, still Lady James might fairly think me an unfit match for her daughter; for *I* cannot give her a name, and have no family to present her to."

"One name, my dear Trevannon, is as good as another, provided the owner has never disgraced it; and for your family, there are better and worse to be met with, and at any rate she is not going to marry any of them, and would assuredly be received with affection by every member thereof, with whom she might wish to associate."

"I wish I knew what was best for *her!*" said Trevannon, in a tone of indecision.

"That you can know only by consulting herself. She is not a silly girl who would mistake the flutter of gratified vanity for real affection. She will either soothe you with gentle words, by which you will learn that her feelings are merely friendly; or she will give an object to your aimless existence, and be at once the excite-

ment and the reward of your future exertions. Do not stand there revolving in your mind every bitter thought that can by possibility attach to both situations; but choose one or other, and have but one to suffer from. In almost every painful situation, it is the province of women to sit still and await the event—to bear and forbear; but men have always a kind of choice, a choice of evils it may be, but still a power of doing something, of pushing boldly through misfortune, and losing the sense of its keenness in active exertion.” Trevannon did not appear to have listened to her last words, but, following the train of his own thoughts, exclaimed,

“ I will hope you are right; at least I confess I am glad of an excuse for yielding to my own wishes. Will you come after me shortly? If I am received with any thing of encouragement, it will be easy to renew the conversation; if I am not, the sooner it is terminated the better.”

Lady Rosamond acquiesced in this arrangement, and was not long before she joined the young couple. Her presence seemed neither a restraint nor a relief; and to judge from their quiet manners, and the deep shade of thought

that rested on their features, a stranger would rather have guessed the subject of their conversation to have been some abstract theory on points not thoroughly understood by either party, than a simple discussion of personal feelings. Miss Saville conversed with her usual self-possession, but not, certainly, with her usual cheerfulness. Trevannon, though more animated, was as serious; and Lady Rosamond could not, without a painful sentiment of compassion, gaze on two beings, to whom she was much attached, thus arrested on the threshold of life by thoughts that made them old before their time. Existence, at their age, is seldom much beyond a dream, more or less soothing and indefinite; but with them the actual struggle of life had begun, and all the powers of their mind were in requisition to carry them through the difficulties that surrounded them.

Lady Avondale heard with the most unfeigned regret, of the new anxieties and perplexities preparing for Lady James. As that lady was expected so shortly, she thought it unnecessary to interfere in the matter, otherwise than by laying before Gertrude the impossibility of an immediate union with Trevannon, and the many objections to so long an engagement.

Miss Saville thanked her for the kindness of her motives, but confessed that all the objections that could be made, were as dust in the balance, compared to the hope of being one day the wife of Trevannon.

“ I fear not my mother’s opposition,” said the young lady ; “ no opposition lasts ten years. I fear not the time that must elapse, I will spend it in endeavouring to be more worthy of him ; but I do dread the climate and his feeble health ;” and she shuddered with such a look of intense anxiety, that Lady Avondale, to change the direction of her thoughts, sportively rallied her for relying so much on the constancy of her lover. Miss Saville made no reply otherwise than by a smile ; and Lady Avondale too smiled, and turned away to sigh—as those who have run half their course cannot choose but sigh over the generous romantic confidence of early youth, which is not the less a blessing for being at times unwisely and incautiously placed.

## CHAPTER XV.

EXCEPTING in days of strife and bloodshed—of public calamity or civil commotion, the life of man is made up of few events, and his everyday feelings and actions, how interesting soever to himself, have little importance in the eyes of others. Thus some years passed over the head of Sir Hubert De Lisle, in his married state, little worth recording, although they proved by much the happiest of his life—nay possibly for that very reason. Time, however, produces gradual changes, unfelt perhaps at the moment, but which are easily detected by looking back. Lady Rosamond was still a very lovely and a very happy woman, but perhaps rather less of both than in the early years of her marriage. Her first annoyance was her husband's going into Parliament, which reduced her to the alternative of going to town when it did not suit

her, or suffering him to go by himself, which suited her still less.

Sir Hubert no sooner saw himself a father, than he began to understand what *his* father's wish had been, of keeping up the family interest. Lady De Lisle came down to witness her son's success, and to congratulate Lady Rosamond; who in her heart lamented it extremely, and thought her mother-in-law's bustle and importance more than usually intolerable. The next blur in her fortunate existence was the character of Lady Julia, her half-sister. Lady Merrion had brought her himself to visit Lady Rosamond shortly after her marriage, and she could not refuse his request of taking her out into public alternately with Lady E. Villars, who had indeed volunteered her services. But Lady Elizabeth, though living in good company, was not what is called the fashion. Lady Rosamond, at all times surrounded by splendour, and known to be independent, came out with vastly more *éclat* than her sister.

Her marriage rather added to her claims in the circle in which she moved. Her husband's affluence, talents, and character, reflected naturally some consequence on her; but with the

idle and the profligate she was also much more an object of attention, from having married a man older than herself, who often declined accompanying her into public. Neither her conduct, nor her manners indeed, gave the slightest hold for censure to fasten upon ; but still, while there was a probability that so young and lovely a woman might be neglected by her husband, it was worth while to make her the empress of the moment.

Her notice, therefore, was distinction—on such incongruous bases do the claims of fashionable women rest ! Her's was by no means a marrying set ; nevertheless it was the first, and therefore Lord Merrion was desirous that his favourite Julia should be received into it. She could not be said to be destitute of beauty, but it was the very reverse of Lady Rosamond's. Her quick dark eye was in perpetual motion, seeking something to amuse her, or some one to admire her. The general expression of her face was lively and good-humoured ; but, if the smile died away, and she remained silent a moment, there was a stern compression of the upper lip that was neither pleasing nor amiable. Her manners were various ; naturally abrupt and dictatorial, they were usually bland and

courteous, and at times soft, sly, and insinuating: in short, she was a good mimic; and was, therefore, whatever for the moment it suited her to appear.

Her father thought her a wit, and her mother was convinced she was a beauty. Her influence with both was boundless, but she sighed for wider sway and more extended power. She was not devoid of jealous feelings respecting her elder sisters, and being satisfied that she was handsomer and cleverer than either of them, it appeared to her most unfair that she should not have their advantages. To marry and outshine them was the object of her ambition, and she scrupled not to make both in their turn the means for effecting her purpose. Not that she absolutely disliked either of them. Lady Elizabeth, indeed, yielded so much to her, owing to natural gentleness and an obliging temper, that Julia could not in her heart complain of her; but Lady Rosamond was less facile, and her colder manners proved a barrier which even Julia could not always surmount.

She liked Sir Hubert better than Villars, who occasionally evinced displeasure at the unceremonious manner in which Lady Julia treated his wife; and besides, it answered better to pay

attention to De Lisle than to his brother-in-law, for he was absolute lord at home ; while Villars, on the contrary, declared it was too much trouble to rule, and was, in real truth, content to follow Elizabeth's suggestions ; probably, conscious that with her mild temper he could resume the reins at pleasure. Lady Julia was amusing and good-humoured, and though her selfishness revolted Lady Rosamond and grieved Lady Elizabeth, she still contrived to make them both useful to her.

Two London seasons, however, passed away, and Lady Julia's matrimonial plans seemed rather less likely to be successful than when first she made her appearance in the gay world. Fresh faces were daily showing themselves, to throw into the back-ground their predecessors ; and though going out had become more agreeable to Julia, as her acquaintance increased, and her mind accustomed itself to the frivolous buzz of lively nothings, or idle gossip, which passed for conversation among those with whom she associated ; she still confessed to herself that her chance for producing any effect was over. She saw it with no small irritation against her sisters, who might, she thought, by better management, have secured for her a bril-

liant establishment. She herself well knew how to attract, and, to do her justice, was never idle in her vocation, but she was not seconded. However skilfully she set to work, she could not pursue her aim as steadily as she could wish; there were long intervals, during which transient fancies cooled imperceptibly and died away.

Lord Merrion saw no company at all. His pride was hurt at having failed in getting his wife noticed by any one, and in pique he withdrew from society altogether. But though he would not give dinners, and Julia could not make his house a morning lounge for young men, she was aware either of her sisters might invite to meet her any of the persons she desired to captivate. That they did not do so, excited her indignation. She roundly accused Elizabeth of unkindness; and though she did not venture on being so explicit with Rosamond, she and Lord Albanley (her firm ally) took care to let her know, by half words and innuendoes, that her conduct was not considered as sisterly.

Lady Elizabeth was vexed, but could not be betrayed so far out of her character as to become a manœuvrer; and Lady Rosamond listened with cold and silent disdain to insinuations she thought it impertinent to make, and the

grounds of which she utterly scorned as a species of moral degradation. When Lady Julia found her plans were of a nature that required assistance, and that to look for it was vain, she changed her line of operations. Abandoning all idea of the prizes that had excited ambitious hopes, which she now seemed farther than ever from realizing, she determined to look only for wealth, and to stand on her own ground for fashionable pretensions. She saw many do so who had fewer claims; and though money in the circle in which she moved, was reckoned a very vulgar thing, she was not disposed to forego its solid advantages, especially as she well knew how to turn it to account.

There were many country squires wealthy enough to answer her purpose, and silly enough to be caught by the glare of her situation and the allurements of her manner. But how to meet with such? Her only chance appeared to be a visit to Sir Hubert at his family mansion. Lady Rosamond had carefully avoided making such an offer, and even Julia had not courage to ask herself to her sister's house. She coaxed and flattered De Lisle for some time to no purpose, and at last took the

desperate resolution of lamenting her situation at home, and confessing, with tears, that the dullest visit to the most uninteresting persons would be a relief to her, so solitary and dismal was her father's house.

Sir Hubert's good-nature thus worked upon, he could not well avoid asking her to finish the summer with them in the country. He had hardly done it when he repented the annoyance it would be to his wife. However, it had been too joyfully accepted to allow of his drawing back, so he made the best of it to Lady Rosamond, and jokingly recommended her honestly to assist her sister in getting married, as the only way of being handsomely rid of her. Lady Rosamond smiled, though she could more willingly have cried, so much did she dislike the arrangement. She had looked forward to the quiet of home, and the uninterrupted enjoyment of her husband's society, with the more pleasure, from being more than usually tired of London, and not feeling very well in health. She was near her confinement, which circumstance added to the depression on her spirits; and of all persons to be with her in a moment of peril, Julia was the very last she would

have chosen. However, she could not help herself, and no one knew better how to submit gracefully to what was inevitable.

It happened rather unluckily for Lady Julia's speculations, that there were very few single men in De Lisle's neighbourhood who were at all affluent, and of those few, none who seemed particularly charmed with her. During a great part of her visit, also, the house was necessarily empty. Lord Avondale and his brother, indeed, came for one day to see Lady Rosamond, and bring word to their mother what the new-born infant was like; but though Charles was always ready to flirt, he was a younger brother, and rather an extravagant person besides, therefore not worth taking any particular pains about; and for Lord Avondale, he was evidently too much ingrossed with the lady of the house to have a stray thought to cast away on her sister.

Her visit was drawing to an end, when one day, as they were sitting in Lady Rosamond's apartment, (which she had not yet left,) the servant brought up a card on which the name of Wilmot was written, saying the gentleman made very particular inquiries after her Ladyship and the child.

“ I am sure,” said Lady Rosamond, showing the card to her husband, “ her Ladyship is most particularly obliged, not having a guess who the gentleman may be.”

“ Nor I,” said De Lisle ; “ it must be a mistake :”—when again looking at the card, he saw at the foot, in more diminutive writing, “ of Allowbank.”

“ Is not that the property in Warwickshire you sold last year ?” asked Lady Rosamond.

“ Just so ; and now I remember the purchaser’s name was Wilmot. I met him once, I recollect, about the business, and he was very civil, and I may have asked him here ; but really I forget, and it would be too hard on you just now to be bothered with a man of that sort.”

“ Why, of what sort is he ?”

“ My lawyer told me he was a kind of Nabob ; and his mahogany complexion bears witness to a warmer climate than ours.”

“ It will be the greater contrast to my pallid one ; but seriously, though I cannot receive strangers, the man must stay, since he is come, and you and Julia must entertain him as best you can.”

“ I shall leave it altogether to Julia ; for he did not appear to me to be a person one could entertain.” So saying, De Lisle went down to receive Mr. Wilmot, and regret that he came at a moment when the house was so particularly dull. Sir Hubert hoped the apology might act as a hint to the guest to shorten his stay ; but Mr. Wilmot was not a gentleman who took hints. He came merely because the house stood in his road, and, finding it comfortable, he remained in it. He had no intention of being in the way, and no idea that he was so—in truth, he seldom thought of any thing but his own convenience, and as he wanted the manners of the world, which gloss over and veil selfishness in some degree, though they by no means extinguish it, there was a simplicity and coolness in his proceedings partly ludicrous and partly provoking.

Lady Julia appeared to think him both more absurd and more wearisome than any one she had ever met with ; and as Sir Hubert was as near being rude to him, as he could suffer himself to be in his own house, Lady Rosamond hoped every day to hear of his departure. Her hopes were not destined to be fulfilled ; and when she made her appearance in the drawing-

room, there she found Mr. Wilmot, looking as much at home as if any one cared to see him. Though excessively provoked at so uninteresting a person thus taking root in her house, she did not think him quite so intolerable as she had expected. He was not young, or handsome, or highly polished, but he was not, she thought, disagreeable, except in the single fact of being there at all.

He had seen much, and he could at times speak pleasantly of what he had seen; he had read too, and was therefore never at a loss in conversation, whatever the topic might be. She thought him indeed more shrewd than amiable, and a far better calculator than philanthropist. Still he said nothing positively objectionable, and paid her as much court as she could desire: indeed, rather more than she wanted. She did not long seek the reason of this conduct: it was easily traced to his admiration of Lady Julia, and though that lady had so frequently exercised her wit at his expense, it was evident she accepted his homage.

That Julia should marry at the first opportunity, did not surprise her sister; but her ridicule of Mr. Wilmot's manners and appearance, and her underhand encouragement of his

pretensions, was doing an unprincipled thing in the worst way in which it could be done; and Lady Rosamond lamented it to her husband, and also confessed she could not help making a wry face when she thought of a man of Mr. Wilmot's *caste* becoming her brother. De Lisle shrugged his shoulders, and tried to console his wife by reminding her that most people had some relations they could dispense with acknowledging, for one reason or other, and that, after all, they need not see a great deal of him.

“I don't know,” she replied: “if he pitches his tent so unceremoniously now, what will he do when he considers himself as one of the family? It quite makes me nervous.”

“That would hardly be worth while; let the worst come to the worst, we should get used to him, for he is no fool, and can amuse himself.”

“He is so old!” said Lady Rosamond, in a tone of affected querulousness.

“That's Julia's affair; and besides, you have no right to object to that.”

“But this Mr. Wilmot is any age.”

“He may possibly be older than I, and Julia certainly is younger than you, which

augments the disparity; but still, considering her vehement resolution to be married, it is nothing so very shocking.”

“ Indeed, I think it is. No one will be found to give her credit for caring for him.”

“ So then, if I had been but a very few years older, you would not have cared for me?”

“ You are very conceited!” said Lady Rosamond, drawing her slender fingers through her husband’s dark hair as he stooped towards her. “ You want to be told I was too much in love to consult the parish register, but I am so cross just now that I cannot flatter even you.”

De Lisle looked at his wife, to whose countenance a sportive expression was so becoming; and thought to himself, “ I wonder if any one thinks her as lovely as I do?—I trust not!” and his bright features were in an instant overshadowed.

## CHAPTER XVI.

HITHERTO, however Lady Rosamond might have fretted at small and transient annoyances, real grief was far from her heart. The sun of prosperity shines for no one in meridian splendour for ever, and she was drawing towards a period of her life when calamity was to be avenged on her for having so long escaped its power. The marriage of her sister had produced one good result. Mr. Wilmot, who was narrow-minded, and consequently mercenary in detail and every-day practice, was very capable of doing handsome things by fits and starts; and when Lord Merrion talked of the fortune he would give his daughter, Mr. Wilmot had a sort of pride in declining it altogether, and making magnificent settlements upon Lady Julia, without receiving any thing from her family.

Lord Merrion had recently lost two boys at school, of an epidemic disorder that carried off great numbers, and having therefore only Lord Alvanley to provide for, his thoughts naturally reverted to Trevannon; and with a little encouragement from Villars and De Lisle, he wrote him word, that if his health still continued feeble, and he was desirous of returning home, he would recommend his sacrificing any advantageous results to be obtained by a longer continuance in India, and his coming back directly; as he had it in his power, without inconvenience to himself, to make him independent.

As Calcutta is not the nearest post-town to London, the whole family, as well as Miss Saville, wrote by the same ship to urge his immediate return, Gertrude only adding *provided* the climate still continued to disagree with him. She was aware that a competence earned by his own exertions, would give him more pleasure than a mere gift even from his father, and that from no one else would he accept it. She tried to hope he was well enough to continue out without inconvenience, and she did hope without any effort at all, that well or ill he would return directly. She sighed to think this *di-*

*rectly* would still be a year, and could only comfort herself by recollecting how many had already passed, and that this was but one. It seemed, indeed, longer than any of the preceding ones, because it was to bring a result, and an uncertain one.

It did at last bring Trevannon himself, whose plan was to unite all possible advantages. He accepted his father's bounty to settle it on his wife, and wished her to return with him to India for the three years, that were almost indispensably necessary to make his having been there at all of any use. Gertrude felt keenly the leaving her mother for so long a period ; but she felt it in silence, nor did she think herself justified in opposing the plan, until she became alarmed about her husband's health. The first excitement of his return—the first exuberance of his joy at realizing the most sanguine of his hopes—was now over, and Gertrude saw with grief and alarm how much the mind had kept up the body, and what a worn-out and feeble frame it was. To cloud his now cheerful spirits by a hint of her apprehensions, seemed barbarous: to allow of his returning to India, was accelerating his death. She went in despair to her mother, who soothed her with hopes, which

she did not herself entertain, and promised to avert the dreaded journey if possible.

Trevannon listened gaily to all Lady James could suggest; assured her he did not remember when he ever felt so well, or so able to do all that would be required of him on his return. He seemed to think her principally actuated by the dread of losing her daughter, and painted in the glowing terms peculiar to himself, the advantages and luxuries of a residence in the East for women. He also amused himself with rousing Anne's pride and indignation, by promising, if she would be very good, to take her with him, and get her a husband. His wife listened and smiled. She thought he must be the best judge of how he felt, and endeavoured to lose anxiety for his health in the delight of contemplating his present enjoyment of existence.

It is probable that this new feeling exhausted the little strength he had left—he died on his passage out, and his wretched widow had to continue her voyage, as if any object in reaching her destination still continued. Severe bodily illness, which was new to her, and the birth of a child, diverted her attention in some measure from the overwhelming desolateness of her

situation. She returned ultimately to England tranquil, though cheerless, with a sickly infant and a broken spirit. She was at first received by her mother, and soon after that visited both Lady Rosamond and Lady Elizabeth, out of respect to her husband's memory, but immediately afterwards taking a small house in the outskirts of the town nearest Lady James, she announced her intention of leading the solitary life that had become congenial to her feelings.

Gertrude had always been a sober person who had never done any thing for effect, and her mother had not forgotten how she had felt when the stay and pride of her life had been withdrawn. She acquiesced therefore in the arrangement without a remonstrance, though many were found to represent to her that by so doing she deserted her duty. There is nothing the world understands so little and condemns so keenly, as withdrawing from its bustle and gaiety. All Mrs. Trevannon's friends were as much censured for suffering her thus unwisely to immure herself, as if she had been a child under their control, or as if they had any thing to offer her in lieu of what she had lost. Animadversions on Lady James had been plentiful before. "It was such a bad mar-

riage ! Mr. Trevannon was so evidently dying ! It was madness to undertake such a voyage !”

It was thus people judged (as usual) of an event, by its actual rather than its probable result : the very same persons would, had Trevannon lived, have extolled Lady James’s prudence and good fortune, in settling so comfortably one of her girls and securing a home for the others. Lady James herself was more inclined to regret having interfered with Anne’s wishes, than to lament having yielded to her sister’s. Charles Avondale was now married, and, his giddiness having merely been the result of high spirits, he had settled into a domestic though still a very merry person : several favourable circumstances had increased his income, and his brother’s retiring habits and disinclination to matrimony seemed to point out his son as the natural heir to the family honours and affluence.

Lady James often thought with a sigh, that but for her over-precautions Anne might have been the wife of Charles ; and though it was true he had become a better match in a worldly point of view than when she interfered to break off the acquaintance, his present wife had not

feared to take him in his worst days, and had been rewarded for her courage. Miss Saville's pretensions were not now what they had been. The brilliancy and freshness of her face and spirits had both faded; and but for a pair of uncommonly fine eyes and an occasional drollery and quaintness of expression, she might have been confounded with that endless mass of spinsters, neglected alike by the young and old, because they belong properly to neither class. Whatever Anne had done, she had done with all her heart, and for a few years her mad spirits led her so wild a career, that she was idolized by her lively acquaintance, and criticized by her more prudent ones. Time, and the small but frequent disappointments which time brings to all, worked its usual change on her mind; and though still a young woman when her sister returned from India, she was like her former self in nothing but the kindness of her heart and placableness of her temper.

She was more useful to Mrs. Trevannon than Lady James, who sympathised too keenly with her; or than Lady Rosamond, who mourned at once her brother and his widow. Gertrude saw as little as she could help of her sisters-in-law. Lady Julia, indeed, never sought her,

and she felt that she cast a chill over the kind hearts of the others. She would sometimes say to Anne, "Visiting me is like coming suddenly from a gay and busy world into the interior of a ruined monastery, through which the damp air creeps lazily, and whither the sunbeam never penetrates. I breathe not in their atmosphere, and I am loth to see them partake of mine!"

Lady Rosamond, indeed, contemplated her situation not merely with grief, but with a sort of foreboding terror. It was so awful a lesson on the instability of worldly happiness! In vain Lady Avondale sought to familiarize her mind with the forlorn lot of her sister-in-law; Lady Rosamond's was weakened by a course of prosperity, and the contrast with her own fate was so excessive that she turned away in shuddering alarm. She was but ill prepared for the next loss she sustained, by the sudden death of Lady Avondale herself. Lady Rosamond had never had any anxiety about her health, which was excellent, and her appearance promised a long life. In the full possession of her strong mental powers, and her almost surprising beauty, (for she had reached the age when it usually diminishes,) she was

unexpectedly cut off, to the consternation of many, and the grief of all.

To Lady Rosamond she had been both a mother and a friend: but who was there to whom she was not something? Who has ever seen the noble, the high-minded, and the benevolent withdrawn, and not felt such rare characters leave a space that cannot be filled up? Where the mighty gift of genius is applied to its proper purposes, it spreads its benign influence far and wide, to the most insignificant outskirts of the circle in which the possessor moves. Lady Avondale was the steady promoter of good in every class and degree of society; she was accordingly mourned, even by those who rarely emulated her virtues, or reasoned on her principles of action. Lady Rosamond deplored her at first only as we lament over what is very dear, and from the enjoyment of whose society we are cut off; but she soon learned to appreciate her loss to its fullest extent. Lady Avondale had that rare faculty of united quick-sightedness, presence of mind, and judgment, which makes a friend a real treasure.

She had considerable influence with Sir Hubert; and though it was always quietly and unostentatiously exerted, Lady Rosamond often

felt its good effects. De Lisle, at an early period of his marriage, had been charmed to see his wife admired. It was not very easy to know exactly what pleased him, for a hair's-breadth more made him jealous, and consequently unreasonable. In vain Lady Rosamond's conduct and manner continued faultless: it was not her he feared at that time, but he was as much annoyed at her being excessively attended to, as he would have been disappointed had she not been attended to at all. Lady Rosamond had a very good temper, but his captious, sensitive disposition, tried it a little, and might have made them really unhappy, had not Lady Avondale been at hand to disperse the clouds ere they became too lowering. She was anxious to prevent Lady Rosamond *proving* that she was right, which is so often a cutting reproof to those who are in the wrong; and she took care, at a proper moment, to hint to De Lisle the danger of wearing out the esteem and admiration his wife had conceived for his character.

There was a smothered feeling in his breast detected by none but Lady Avondale, and which she was reluctant to point out to her adopted child. This was a shrinking dislike of

Eveleyn, the young Lord Avondale. De Lisle could not bear to think he had been engaged to Lady Rosamond, and might possibly have married her had he tried to please her. It was so unreasonable to object to a man for not having been in love with his wife, that he had not courage to betray his sentiments, and affected to receive Lord Avondale with marked distinction. Lady Rosamond rather feared that he did not cordially like this, her oldest and best friend; but though she regretted it, she was at the same time flattered by the attention shown Lord Avondale, and took it as a compliment to herself. We have usually an unerring instinct respecting the friendly feelings of others. Lord Avondale understood that he was no favourite with De Lisle, and he became chilled and constrained; which he was sorry for, as he would gladly have made a friend of the husband of one whom he considered as his sister.

Time passed on, and increased the distance between these two persons, making them feel on the defensive in each other's society. Lady Rosamond naturally sought to make up for what she supposed was accidental neglect on her husband's part, by redoubled kindness on her own; and Lord Avondale easily fell into the

habit of devoting himself entirely to her, during the short and unfrequent visits which he made to the Park. Lady Rosamond's third boy had been called Eveleyn, though Lady Avondale had laboured to prevent it. This child was not as handsome as the others, but he was by much the most intelligent; and Lady Rosamond, who had a great respect for talent, was proud of him, and rather brought him forward before his elder brothers. Sir Hubert viewed this supposed partiality with many a secret pang, but, ashamed of complaining about it, he aggravated the evil, by overlooking the boy whenever he could. The nursery-maids, even the villagers, knew well that Master Eveleyn was not *papa's favourite*; and he heard it so often, that he naturally dreaded his father, and flew for protection and kindness to his mother.

“I believe that child positively dislikes me,” would he say sometimes in bitterness to Lady Avondale; and all her *tact* and address seemed insufficient to remove the unpleasant impression. It had indeed a deeper root than she could reach.

The birth of a little girl dispersed the evil for a time. She was called Ellen, and what was peculiar, promised to be like her godmother.

She was the established pet with her father, from the moment she could stand alone; and the boys becoming all secondary objects to her, poor little Eveleyn seemed no longer marked out, or in any way distinguished from the rest. Even at that early age, however, the impression was given, and the child, though less shy with his father, never voluntarily sought him. Two more boys and another girl were born before Lady Avondale's death, but without making any material alteration in the domestic feelings of the family. The children were all carefully attended to, and cared for; but Eveleyn continued to be thought Lady Rosamond's favourite, and Ellen was still Sir Hubert's.

## CHAPTER XVII.

LADY Rosamond had by no means recovered the first shock of Lady Avondale's loss, when Parliament met, and her husband, expecting every day a call of the House, was obliged to go to town. He went alone, leaving it to Lady Rosamond to join him when her spirits were sufficiently recovered to leave home. Had Lady Rosamond been mourning any other calamity with Lady Avondale near her, she would have been roused to exertion by a sense of duty, however painful the effort might have been. But the warning voice was mute, and there was no one now to remind her, that while she yielded to dejection, and gave useless tears to the dead, she was neglecting the comfort of the living. Every day found her more and more reluctant to leave her own quiet fireside ; and knowing that De Lisle did not care for London, she urged his

return to her, in lieu of her joining him. To this he readily agreed, but as no time was fixed for his leaving town, some engagement of business or pleasure started up, and induced him to put it off from week to week.

His natural indecision gave him all the appearance of returning home with reluctance; and the friends he had in town thought they did him a favour by pressing his stay, and furnishing him with an excuse for doing what he wished. Meanwhile, Lord Avondale, whose domestic comfort was utterly annihilated by the death of his mother, wearying of his cheerless, solitary home, came to spend some time at the Park. He was surprised to find its master still absent; but as Lady Rosamond was in continual expectation of him, he thought it needless to abandon his first intention. His was a retiring, rather than a gloomy temper, and his present depression seemed so deep and excessive, that Lady Rosamond strove to rally her own spirits in the hope of diminishing his sadness. Glad to find her influence undiminished, and to perceive its beneficial results,—somewhat hurt also at the unaccustomed neglect of her husband,—she devoted herself to the person who seemed

most in need of her attention, and ceased to urge Sir Hubert's return.

He felt this as a man of his disposition, and with his secret hoard of unpleasant impressions respecting Lord Avondale, might be expected to feel. Of late years, his naturally vigorous understanding, and his clearer perceptions of principle, religious as well as moral, had enabled him to quell those wayward, distrustful feelings, which had so long poisoned all his own enjoyment, as well as that of his friends. It seemed now as if the dormant, not extirpated, evil had gathered strength by its long repose; or perhaps, like a mole, it had worked long and secretly in the dark, ready to burst forth whenever an opportunity presented itself.

As a matter of reasoning, he could not doubt his wife's affection for him: he knew it was not very sensible to insist on her caring for no one else; and like all proud persons, who are much alive to the ludicrous, and accordingly in dread of ridicule, he would have endured any penance rather than the shame of revealing the miserable sensations with which he heard of Lord Avondale's being at the Park. As nothing essential required his presence in town,

the natural and rational thing would have been to return home to his guest; but he was not just then in a rational frame of mind, and fearful that his hurrying back would betray his secret, he lingered on in self-created torment. His thoughts speedily became so inflamed, that he persuaded himself his wife had rather not see him during Lord Avondale's visit. It was natural that they should lament together the loss of one who had acted as mother to them both, and under whose roof their earliest, perhaps their happiest hours had been spent. Sometimes he indulged in meditations of this sort, the affected moderation of which he might have easily detected, had he chosen honestly to do so; and at other times he gave way to the full tide of suspicion and resentment, and hurried from one amusement to another with feverish haste.

What was Lady Rosamond's dismay at receiving a few short lines from Villars, advising her coming up to town immediately, ere Sir Hubert's new and unaccountable fancy for gaming had grown into a habit! Ill-advised as our actions often are, we have usually an inward monitor, which, if attended to, would guide us better. At the touch of affliction, sophistry

and false feeling were silenced at once, and truth, naked truth, prompted the exclamation which now burst from Lady Rosamond, "It is my own fault; why did I leave him!" She mentioned her intention of joining her husband, since his return appeared so uncertain; and Lord Avondale read in her hurried manner, and the changes of a countenance with which he had been so long and so intimately acquainted, that the apparently natural determination was the result of painful feelings.

He remarked that it followed close on the letter from Villars, to whose hand-writing he was no stranger; and truly solicitous about all that could affect her happiness, he resolved on going to town himself, and seeing Lady Elizabeth, with whom he was as intimate as his reserved habits allowed of his being with any one. He set off therefore at the same time with Lady Rosamond, but, accustomed to travel by night as well as day, he pushed on for town without stopping. She would gladly have done the same thing, but she could give no reason for so unusual an exertion, and besides, wished not to arrive before the letter that announced her intention. This letter found her husband in a most irksome state of mind; and short and

simple as it was, he turned it in every possible way to discover in it a meaning beyond its obvious and natural one. Still, on the whole, he was glad she was coming, and felt willing to consider it as a proof of regard.

When she actually did arrive, it seemed as if her mere presence had power to chase away the vapours that had been gathering round his brain. She tried to look more cheerful than she felt, and was rewarded for the effort by the satisfaction De Lisle showed on seeing her smile again. The first two days were balm to his heart, but on the third his evil genius appeared in the form of Lady Julia Wilmot. This lady was not improved by her marriage. The first step in moral degradation usually leads to another. She had married without affection or esteem, simply for a brilliant establishment. That favourite object was attained, and she had now leisure to feel how much must be added to it before it be worth the having for any purpose of real comfort. The happiness which she had missed, she contemplated in others with sadness slightly tinged with envy. This feeling was stronger towards her elder sister than her younger one. She thought Lady Elizabeth could have been happy with any

indulgent husband. Besides, as she rather underrated Villars, to be an object with him did not seem to her a great matter; but she admired and looked up to De Lisle, and felt she should have been proud of the regard of a man whose regard was honour.

Convinced that Lady Rosamond and her husband were not only happier than herself, but also more worthy of being so, she had a malicious pleasure in bringing out their defects and making them uncomfortable for an instant. The exertion of any sort of influence over those above us is pleasing, because it gives us a momentary superiority. Lady Julia had often found, that by rallying Lady Rosamond on her love for her husband in his presence, she invariably extorted some cold deprecating observation that was painful to De Lisle. She tried it in vain, however, on this occasion; and, secretly provoked at producing so little effect, she cast about for some subject on which Sir Hubert and his wife were likely to have dissimilar feelings.

“By the by,” she said, with affected carelessness, to her sister, “are you by chance in Lord Avondale’s confidence, and can you inform me how long he intends being in town *incog.*?”—

“ I was not aware he intended making a mystery of the fact,” replied Lady Rosamond.

“ It looks vastly like it, at least. I never meet him in public, and going up by chance yesterday evening at Elizabeth’s, I found him sitting alone with her, looking very much, to do him justice, as if he wished me fairly at the devil for my unseasonable intrusion. I did my best to make Villars jealous this morning; but the gallant Captain, afraid of losing his temper with his wife, gave poor innocent me all the benefit of the storm. I was glad to run away. I dare say if you go to my boudoir now, you will find him, not sulking (which might be allowable in an apartment so named), but giving vent to his wrath in proper sea terms, which it must be confessed have the merit of being expressive, if they are not elegant.”

“ How is it possible, my dear Julia, you can find any pleasure in teasing people so uselessly? Villars has a very fine temper; you must have been ingenious to ruffle it.”

“ Indeed, my merit that way was slender. I did but say you had grown too serious for the young peer, too like himself, and so he was transferring his sentimental attachment to our gayer sister. Now, as I am certainly merrier

than either of you, I wished Villars to guess when he thought my turn would come? I assure you, he was quite rude."

"And I assure you I think you deserved it. Mirth is a very good thing, and a very amusing thing; but there should be some subjects held sacred from its exertion."

"Oh! I'm off, if you begin preaching; it dashes one worse than a regular scold. Will you dine with me to-morrow? And bring Lord Avondale in your train, since you know where he is to be found, and I do not."

"He is to be found at the Albany, and you may send and ask him if you will; I may possibly not see him between this and then. Lady James Saville dines with us, which will prevent my coming to you."

"Is Lady James in town! I was not aware of that. I hope Mrs. Trevannon is not, or she will abuse me for not calling on her."

"Gertrude is not apt to abuse any one, and would hardly begin with her husband's sister. But to quiet your alarm, let me assure you she is not in town; and should she come up, it would be entirely upon business, and not at all by way of seeing any one."

"How lucky for me! Poor thing! they say

she don't recover her spirits at all, and yet it was no more than every body expected."

"You expect your own death one of these days, Julia, and yet I doubt its being agreeable when it does come."

"Oh! one's own is different. I must be off to ride out with Alvanley. I have got a beautiful horse, nearly a match to his mare; and we flatter ourselves we have a fine effect in the Park. Heigh ho! I do want something to enliven me, for you have fairly given me the blue devils. It has been an unlucky morning: begun by Wilmot's refusing me money—which he loves as his own soul—nay, 'tis my belief, better—next, I had my favourite china jar broken between baby and nurse;—my lace scarf torn by the monkey, poor little dear!—then came Villars. In short, if I did but examine, I should discover a calamity for every hour. I really marvel at my own heroism in being able to bear up so well, and to do the agreeable for all my family; for you only open your mouth to censure me, and Sir Hubert don't think me worthy even of that species of notice."

"Your Ladyship is so entertaining," said De Lisle, forced to say something, "that it would be a pity to interrupt you."

“ Well ! that’s a tolerable speech for want of a better ; so now you may have the honour of handing my ladyship to my carriage.” And Lady Julia tripped gaily down stairs, satisfied with having somehow or other harassed both the persons she came to see. Perhaps she might have felt a touch of remorse, had she been aware how deep was the pang she had inflicted on her brother-in-law.

The thought that pressed on his sick fancy was, that his wife had wished to come to town, not to see him, but because Lord Avondale was leaving her. *He* then was the attraction ; and her home had appeared lonely only when he left her. The simplicity and quietness of Lady Rosamond’s remarks did not stagger this belief in the least. There was nothing to be embarrassed about, for he did not suspect her of seeing him clandestinely, though he could not help thinking it was odd he had never called. It looked like discretion and prudence, either on his part or her’s, and what have the young and the innocent to do with such over-caution ? He said nothing however, and still Lord Avondale came not ; and dining a day or two after at Lady Julia’s, De Lisle heard he had left town. It happened that very day Lady Rosa-

mond had proposed returning home, and there was an immediate, though not very reasonable connexion, in Sir Hubert's mind, between these two circumstances.

Another unpleasant incident awaited him at this dinner:—they met an elder brother of Mr. Wilmot there, a gentleman in the army, who claimed acquaintance, almost relationship, with the proud Baronet. It was many years since they met, and the old soldier did not appear to remember that any disagreeable impression of that period could rest on the mind of De Lisle. He spoke of the changes that had occurred in the situation of both: of his good fortune in getting his rank in the army, while so many who were, he was willing to believe, as deserving, had been passed over. He talked of Spa, its local beauties, its society, and, if he did not actually mention Madame de Lausanne, that he thought of her was evident; and even once, pursuing the current of his thoughts rather than his conversation, he added with a sly smile, which he meant to be witty—

“But I forget! we must not talk of all those gay and youthful pastimes: you have married, and grown steady. By Jove! I sometimes wish I had done so too.”

Although Sir Hubert winced beneath these innuendoes in presence of his wife, who was utterly ignorant of the subject predominant in General Wilmot's mind, yet his self-command and naturally haughty bearing prevented any one from perceiving his annoyance. But his patience was more severely tried afterwards, when, on the gentlemen being summoned to coffee, he perceived that the General had taken too much wine, and in that state, unawed by Lady Rosamond's frigidity, and attracted by her beauty, he made his way up to her, and establishing himself on the sofa by her side, seemed willing to devote himself to her for the rest of the evening. It was evidently not her intention, however, that he should do so, as she presently arose, and went towards the piano-forte. Thither the persevering General followed her.

De Lisle went up to her assistance, on which, General Wilmot turned round to him with a broad grin on his face, and assured him he was not telling tales of him, though he *could*, indeed, say something of a foreigner—a second Aspasia—who had not been inimical to either of them, though, to be sure, she left one for the other; but then, in love and war all stratagems were allowable! All this Sir Hubert would

have cared little for, had Lady Rosamond exactly known how the case stood. But though they had hitherto loved each other, and been happy in their union, De Lisle's reserved temper required a frank and animated one like Lady Avondale's to impel his confidence. He spoke, indeed, to his wife openly of what interested them both: he concealed nothing deliberately, but he felt no temptation at any time to dwell with her over his past life, or to revert to a period when she had been almost in her cradle. She, on her part, fearing that what was not said, might be painful to reveal, avoided giving any opening to such conversations.

In this instance she was provoked with General Wilmot, as one is with a coarse and vulgarminded man, and left her sister's earlier than she had intended, to escape his drunken garrulity, but his hints respecting her husband were lost upon her. She gathered from them, he wanted to tease him about some former mistress. She was quite sure De Lisle, from taste, and she hoped from principle, could never have been a profligate; and with the follies of his youth, before he had ever beheld her, she did not think she had any thing to do. At any other time, her husband would in his heart have

thanked her for her forbearance, and would have rejoiced to have been saved all discussion of Spa and Thérèse. But now, with the demon of jealousy astir within him, he was hurt at her never reverting to General Wilmot's bad jokes. Perhaps she had no right to be jealous, but was she to be so utterly indifferent to his feelings and actions at *any* period of his life?

The very next day an anonymous letter was sent to Lady Rosamond, ridiculing her confidence in her immaculate husband, and telling her, if she would drive that day through the Regent's Park at a particular hour, she would meet a fair woman in a foreign carriage, with a child in her arms, which she could not fail knowing from its likeness to Sir Hubert. De Lisle was frequently in the habit of opening his wife's letters. He did so in this instance, and was struck with horror at the baseness of the calumny. Certainly there was a colour to the thing. He had frequently visited the foreigner in question, and had himself taken the house near the Regent's Park, (though not on his own account,) in which she resided for the convenience of giving an airing daily to her sick child. She was the niece of Madame de Lausanne, who, after leading a wandering life, had, when her youth was quite

gone, unexpectedly received an offer of marriage from an English merchant. Thankful for a permanent and respectable home, she had been residing some years in the city of London, when chance brought her in the way of De Lisle.

Glad to see any one she had beheld, though but for a moment, in her own country, she claimed acquaintance with him, and related, that her aunt, having richly endowed a convent, was permitted to reside within its walls, without actually taking the veil; and being now an old woman, she was occasionally visited by females as well as men, as a sort of curiosity. She had declined all her niece's invitations to England, but inquired much after De Lisle, and heard of his marriage with pleasure. Mrs. Brown, indeed, could speak of Lady Rosamond only by hearsay, not moving in a circle in which she had any chance of beholding her; and Sir Hubert saw no reason for introducing her to his wife, or even for naming her, blended as she was with her aunt's story, which he never could think of without discomfort. Had Lady Rosamond made her appearance immediately, before the first flow of honest indignation, on receipt of the anonymous letter, had subsided, it is certain he would have spoken of it as it deserved,

and explained the whole of his connexion with the fair foreigner. Unluckily, she had walked out to see Lady Elizabeth, who was confined with a severe cold, and had left word for De Lisle to call for her there when he came in.

He could not resist a feeling of curiosity to know how she would act, if left quite to herself; and he sealed up the letter again, and left it on the table. When they returned home, she took it, together with several others, opened it, coloured violently, bit her lip, then hastily chucking it into her work-basket, proceeded to read the others. This was strange, her husband thought. Did she give credit to the slander? Did she intend to follow the directions given her? It was within half an hour of the time, and she expected her carriage every minute. He took his hat, and walked towards the Regent's Park examining every carriage, but without seeing his own. Indeed, when he returned home, he found that she had sent it away, saying she should not want it till the evening. She received him kindly, appeared in good spirits, and did not in any way allude to the anonymous letter.

The fact was, that though the hand-writing was disguised, Lady Rosamond had immediate-

ly recognized it as her brother Lord Alvanley's. She guessed it was a trick, but she well knew it was one her husband would resent; she accordingly took advantage of his absence to inclose the scrawl and send it back to the writer, mildly recommending him to choose his frolics more discreetly another time. All this De Lisle knew nothing of, and he almost brought himself to believe that Lady Rosamond's behaviour indicated more than indifference; that it looked very much as if she wished him drawn a little more from home! It was thus that a mutual want of confidence precipitated the evil days to which this once happy couple were fast approaching.

They returned to the country and to their children; but De Lisle continued restless and unhappy. He filled his house with company, and put away the hours that weighed on him as a burden. Lady Rosamond beheld this change in his temper and pursuits with the most poignant uneasiness, and feared he was weary at home for the want of that stimulus he had for a moment found in gaming. Distrusting her own powers, she sought foreign aid to amuse her husband. She was the first to propose gaiety of every sort, and kept it up with a

spirit that looked like enjoyment. While she was working solely for her husband, he imagined that, like himself, she was trying to drown thought. He remarked that Lord Avondale never came near them, and that Lady Rosamond did not even mention him: nay, once when Charles Avondale said something of his brother, she sighed, and a shade of such deep sadness stole over her countenance, that Sir Hubert slowly smote his hands together, and felt the iron enter his soul.

The autumn was advancing. Lady Rosamond took her children to the sea-side, her husband having gone to shoot in Scotland. It was the first time they had been parted without some positive necessity. It seldom happens that men are very fond of writing; the less too they talk, usually the less they like the exertion of epistolary communication. And then, a shy man who fears to commit himself, has an instinctive reluctance to write down his thoughts or intentions. De Lisle accordingly thought he wrote very often, while Lady Rosamond wept over the brief notice of his existence, and the long intervals between each. He returned, however, and though fearful she had quite lost him, she dressed her face in feigned hilarity to welcome

him home. He looked at the placid smile, the clear blue eye, neither soft through tears, nor bright with animation, and the thought arose, "I have not been missed." He embraced her however, seemed charmed to see the children, and she once more ventured to hope he would be happy at home.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

THE hunting season arrived, which was a gay period in their part of the country, and especially with them, as Sir Hubert kept the hounds. One day having injured his horse in the field, De Lisle dismounted and led the poor animal home, fearing, if he trusted it to any one else, it might not be properly attended to. After seeing every thing done which he thought necessary, he left the stables, and pulling off his splashed boots in his own room, entered his wife's apartment in slippers. Her morning room was up stairs, and had a high screen before the door, by way of sheltering the spot where she usually sat. He followed the servant, who was carrying in coals; and before he had taken two steps forward, saw reflected in a large mirror, on one side of the room, the unwelcome figure of Lord Avondale! That he

should have fixed on the very day on which he would of course be out with the hounds, showed pretty evidently for *whom* his visit had been intended. He seemed to be there like an apparition, for neither carriage nor horse had De Lisle seen, which could have conveyed him to the Park.

He paused for a moment to be quite sure of himself, then, as the footman approached the door, he advanced, and slightly struck the screen, to arrest the attention of his wife's visitor. Lord Avondale did accordingly turn round, and greeted him with a sort of cold surprise; but Lady Rosamond's face was covered with her handkerchief, and when she withdrew it, on hearing Lord Avondale address some one else, she discovered a face blistered with tears. Whether she was unconscious of them, or forgot them at that moment, her husband did not quite make out; but he was surprised at her betraying only apprehension lest he should have hurt himself—whether he had not fallen?—and several other questions put so rapidly and anxiously, that De Lisle hardly knew which to answer first. Having assured her nothing but cold and hunger ailed him, and mentioned the reason of his unexpected return, he forced him-

self to say something civil to Lord Avondale, but made it up to himself by somewhat bitterly apologizing to his wife for his intrusion. He smiled indeed, and spoke in a tone that might have passed for jest; but Lady Rosamond had seen his eye kindle, and though of late she had not unfrequently had taunting speeches to endure, they had not lost their power to wound.

She considered that she had brought this one on herself, by betraying a too anxious tenderness about him. Convinced that her husband had ceased to care for her, she carefully forbore, in general, from any demonstrations of affection, as more likely to weary than to gratify him. But this time she was off her guard, and he had probably thought her absurd, and punished her for it! Her attention was diverted from this bitter feeling by the departure of Lord Avondale, who, to Sir Hubert's surprise, requested him to walk down with him to the village, where he had left his chaise for the amusement of his servant, who had some relations in the place. Lord Avondale had been so much in the habit of neglecting De Lisle, that the latter could not understand to what he owed the unusual request for his company, and could only see in it a wish to give Lady Rosamond time to

recover from her emotion. As usual, however, he wrapt all this in the secret folds of his heart, and conversed with his guest during their short walk, with every appearance of a free and light-some spirit.

They were within a few yards of the humble ale-house, before the door of which the chaise was standing, when Lord Avondale stopped, and turning his serious eye full on his companion, said, "I am about to leave home and England, probably for a considerable time. I am not much addicted to offering spontaneous advice, and to one who is so much my senior, and whose character stands so high as Sir Hubert De Lisle's, it is almost, one would think, a useless impertinence. Forgive me if I cannot depart for an indefinite period, without recommending to you the happiness of my dear, my excellent Rosamond! without as it were bequeathing to *you* all the tenderness I feel for her! For many years the sun shone not on a fairer flower: look to it—for it is fading!"

Strong emotion seemed to prevent his adding another word: he pressed forward, evidently not wishing to be answered, for by doing so he stood within hearing of the village group that surrounded his carriage. He then held out his

hand to De Lisle; almost inarticulately added, "God bless you *both!*" and springing into his carriage, had driven past Sir Hubert, ere the latter had recovered from the solemnity and fervour of his warning. He turned mechanically homeward, and lingered along the path as though it had been summer weather.

"It is plain," thought he, "my evil destiny admits of nothing worse. He loves her, and it is probable he sees she returns the affection, and deems flight his only safeguard. And those bitter tears (she who so seldom weeps!) flowed to his departure. And she would have wiped them off ere I returned; and I should never have known that the arrow was in her soul. What a life of constraint and hypocrisy will her's be henceforth! Why should it be so? Happiness for me is over! Why should I make *her* more miserable? Better to part at once!"

With this idea arose the thought of his children. It was hard to give them up, and would not be quite fair to deprive their mother of them. His brain became a chaos; and he returned to his wife's apartment, merely because he was accustomed to go thither, and had no motive for going elsewhere. He found her as

he had expected, perfectly calm, and very busily at work mending the girl's doll. He gazed at her for a moment in fretful silence, and then murmured something about the needlessness and affectation of such composure.

Ingrossed with her occupation, she had not given full attention to what he said; but she thought it something strange, and looked up to see if she could read any explanation in his countenance. There was gloom and dejection on his brow, but no more, she fancied, than had been often visible of late; and silently smothering a sigh, she resumed her work. Her husband thought this looked like a consciousness that his reproach was well founded, and at the same time so great an indifference to his opinion, that it was not worth while to endeavour to refute it.

In the midst of exclamations of mingled bitterness and grief, he asked if she could think of nothing but Lord Avondale, and if every thing was lost in the misery of his departure? It was some time before Lady Rosamond could understand that this term implied, that the friend and companion of her youth was actually leaving his country, and knew not when he might return to it.

“Cruel Eveleyn!” exclaimed she, “to leave me without one kind word; ignorant of all his intentions, and knowing only that he is unhappy! Oh! my noble generous mother!” she added, clasping her hands with an energy she seldom betrayed, “when death stilled your warm heart, I little thought not another remained on earth that beat for the child of your care!”

She covered her head, and wept in unrestrained and helpless sorrow. When her husband perceived she had been ignorant of the fact he had taken so harsh a way of communicating, something like remorse struck on his heart. He saw that Lord Avondale, finding Lady Rosamond out of spirits, had wished the intelligence to be communicated by another; and he could not persuade himself he had in any way fulfilled the intention of having it gently announced. But he stifled the voice of conscience, and, refusing to see that this unusual burst of sorrow in his wife, arose as much from his own conduct as from Lord Avondale's departure, he sat in stern silence, feeding his wrath and his jealousy on her tears.

They flowed long, mixed with such deep and heavy sobs, that could he have attributed them

to any other cause, De Lisle would have left nothing untried to soothe them. They ceased at last, and she remained perfectly motionless, with her thin fair hands clasped above the handkerchief that concealed her face. Her extreme stillness terrified De Lisle. He gazed on those bloodless hands, till he fancied they looked emaciated, and till Lord Avondale's warning returned on his ear like that of a prophet.

A summons to dinner broke the, to him, appalling silence ; and in a kinder voice than usual, he asked her if she would not come down. She returned a feeble negative, and he immediately left her, surprised and provoked at what he thought a mark of displeasure. Lady Rosamond had so sweet a temper, that any thing looking like the reverse was new to him, and offended him in proportion to its novelty. He ate his solitary meal in sullenness, and had not long concluded it when he rang the bell to know what was meant by the hasty trampling of a horse beneath the window.

“ It's the doctor, sent for for my lady,” replied the servant, with a look, Sir Hubert thought, of some surprise at his master, for not being aware of the fact.

De Lisle was disposed to be angry at every thing. He thought the maid who attended Lady Rosamond (the faithful Bridget, who had lived with her so long) was delighted to make a bustle, and show off a little authority; and sulkily observed, he might as well be informed when a horse was to be taken out of his stable at that hour, and with the roads a sheet of ice. The servant withdrew in silence. The Doctor arrived, and was pounced upon by a maid-servant in waiting, before he had seen Sir Hubert. He entered Lady Rosamond's chamber, but seemed in no hurry to leave it; and De Lisle, not liking to go up himself, yet wretchedly anxious at so prolonged a visit, sat with his door open to catch the first sound of descending feet.

After hours of suspense, the well-known step was heard, and De Lisle ran up stairs and met the Doctor at the door, who gravely said, "We have, I hope, no ground for alarm; Lady Rosamond has a good constitution, and recovers well in general. The child, of course, we could not save. I understand it was barely six months?"

He might have continued as much longer as he chose, for Sir Hubert, perfectly stunned, was unable to attempt a reply. He was not

aware that his family was likely to be increased. He had sometimes thought Lady Rosamond looked thin and ill at ease, latterly; but she was wrapped in thick shawls, he supposed on account of the peculiar severity of the season, and she herself had never alluded to her situation. On expressing his wonder afterwards to Bridget, the old woman somewhat testily remarked, "that the thing was plain enough to be seen by any one that cared to see it, and that her lady never did talk of any thing of the kind; so if there was nobody to ask her, it was no wonder nobody knew."

Her master perfectly understood from this speech, that Bridget at least attributed Lady Rosamond's altered spirits to his unkindness. He was hurt for a moment, and then generously rejoiced that it was so, and that she would escape all suspicion of what he looked upon as the real cause. Whatever his ultimate intention might be, he was aware that in common humanity this was not the moment for unpleasant discussion. He therefore, when admitted to the sick room, treated her with gentleness, if not with affection; and Lady Rosamond, feeble in body and depressed in mind, did not seem to wish for more. When alone, he brooded over many a painful thought. Lady Rosa-

mond had brought him a large family. No illness or accident had ever occurred before. She had often rejoiced in her strength, and expressed a doubt of any thing hurting her. Was it only because she had never anticipated a parting with Lord Avondale? When that trial came, it proved beyond her strength, and *he* it was who had put her life in peril, and destroyed that of her infant. De Lisle was glad of an excuse for hating him; and he did hate him with all the vehemence of evil, unrestrained passion. Before Lady Rosamond had recovered sufficiently to see any one, or receive letters, one had arrived from Lord Avondale. De Lisle opened it, and read, with a spirit determined to detect more than the writer intended, the following hasty lines:—

“Dearest Rosa, I cannot leave England without turning naturally to her who for so many years gladdened my now desolate home. I had meant to submit my plans to you when I stopped at the Park, but I had not courage. You have so much power over me! I dreaded that power; for had you made me stay, I should still have been restless and discontented. My departure as a matter of reasoning is absurd; do not reason about it. *I* can only feel,

can only look round me, and perceive all I have ever loved removed by death (or events over which I have as little control) far beyond my influence, altogether out of my grasp. In foreign countries, where a love of home is unknown, I may learn to forget how thoroughly my hopes of domestic comfort are blasted. If I am amused and recover my spirits, I will return; if I weary of all that is not England, I will equally return. Thus you see every thing will lead to the same result, and that probably at no remote period. Take care of your health and your beauty, my dear Rosa. I should be sorry on my return to find either diminished. Your affectionate AVONDALE."

Mrs. Trevannon came to nurse Lady Rosamond as soon as she was able to sit up, and to her Sir Hubert gave Lord Avondale's letter. On reading it, Lady Rosamond expressed some satisfaction at the prospect of Eveleyn's speedy return; and unable to write herself, she dictated a few kind lines to Gertrude, and then tried to hope he might find amusement and relief in his plan of wandering. She had a confused remembrance of her husband's jealousy; but it was his habit to be jealous, and of late to be

displeased. She lamented it, without supposing it applied more to Lord Avondale than to any one else. She had but one way of explaining his conduct. She supposed he had ceased to care for her, and that, discontented with himself, and disgusted with his home, every trifle became matter of annoyance, and disturbed his temper.

The Solways, who saw they were not happy, tried to soothe and amuse them either together or separately; and as they succeeded better in the latter case, Mr. Solway perpetually took De Lisle from home on some pretext or other. His wife, left to the gentle care of Gertrude, and ashamed of thinking herself unhappy in the presence of her widowed sister, gradually recovered some strength and serenity. Sir Hubert was summoned from the Seymours, where he had been spending some time, by Mrs. Trevannon, who informed him all the children were ill with an influenza, but that Ellen and Eveleyn were thought to be in danger.

He did not wait for a second message, and was charmed to find his little girl already recovering. The others had been slightly attacked; Eveleyn alone appeared unable to shake off the malady, and his mother watched him

with an anxiety, that for the moment absorbed all other feeling. De Lisle was sorry the child suffered, but he fancied his wife exaggerated the danger, and saw in her devotion to the poor boy, a proof only of the extreme partiality with which she regarded the godson of Lord Avondale. Had it died, he would have become reasonable; for he loved all his children, and would not have wondered at any excess of grief in their mother. But it recovered, and then he refused to believe any thing had ailed it more than the others.

Lady Rosamond knew Eveleyn was not his father's favourite, but she did not think he could see the infant in so precarious a state without considerable uneasiness; she was revolted at his betraying so little. Indifference to her, she looked upon more as a misfortune of her own, than a fault in him—but indifference to his child! It was heartless! unnatural! and for the first time she felt indignant as well as vexed. His quick eye was not long in discerning this new feeling. There wanted little, thought he, to turn the balance. If we cease to care for what we have loved, we soon reach absolute dislike. Now, then, there is no room for doubt or hesitation—the time is come when we *must* part.

Accordingly, the morning on which Gertrude left them, he sent to beg Lady Rosamond would come down to his room. It was long since she had received such an invitation, and she obeyed it with something of the alacrity of former days. Her light step, her mild and peaceful countenance, the almost cheerful tone in which she addressed her husband, acted most painfully on him. He felt as if he could not breathe in the house, and asked if she would be afraid of walking a little way with him. She readily assented, and throwing a shawl over her shoulders followed him out on the lawn. He laboured to repress the agitation that shook his frame, and sat down on a garden-seat, hardly knowing whether he had courage to go through with his resolution.

“Are you going no farther?” asked Lady Rosamond: “it is rather damp here.”

“We shall not be here long,” said he, in a low tone, “and we want no sunshine for our conversation.”

He paused, and his wife’s pulse beat fast, apprehensive of some new fancy that would be distressing to listen to, though little guessing what it was to be.

He resumed, “We do not require a long con-

versation on a harassing subject. I wished, as concisely as possible, to mention my conviction that our present uncomfortable situation might be ameliorated with a little resolution. Perhaps we shall find it impossible to be happy—but we shall spare ourselves much of what we now endure, by parting at once.”

De Lisle stopped. He did not venture at first to look at his wife, but, surprised at her silence, he did at last look up. She stood before him with her eyes dilated, her colourless lips half unclosed, her whole attitude that of fixed attention and painful surprise. There she stood, silent, motionless, eager to take in at every possible sense the full measure of wretchedness.

He was shocked at her countenance. He perceived that he had so long contemplated the plan he now proposed, that it had escaped him how new it was to her, and how unprepared she was for so serious a determination. He took her hand, and, obliging her to sit beside him, he regretted having so abruptly mentioned his intention, which, of course, was more familiar to his own imagination than it could be to her's.

“You know me, Rosamond,” he continued, “and you know, I hope, that you have no harsh-

ness,—no unnecessary harshness—to fear from me! I am acting from reason, not from waywardness; and when you recover from the astonishment with which I lament to see you have listened to me, you will discover that I am right; and that I have considered *your* feelings as much, if not more than my own. I will not deprive you of the children. Two of the boys are at school: I ask but to share their holidays with you. The others you will sometimes send to visit me. It is a great sacrifice; but I can bear any thing better than the life I have led for some time. I shall shut up this house on the plea of economy, and reside, when in the country, at my shooting-box, which is larger than I want for myself. The cottage we built by the sea, and which you are so fond of, will contain the rest of the family; and there is the house in town, to which you can go when I am not there.”

Sir Hubert had spoken in breathless haste to get over, what he conceived to be, necessary arrangements, but on which, nevertheless, it was inexpressibly painful to dwell. He felt relieved when all was said, and added a few words of general soothing and kindness. It did not appear that Lady Rosamond was conscious of their

import. She sat with both her hands covering her face, too much overcome to speak, but sufficiently herself to comprehend the prospect thus opened upon her. That he should so long have considered all this ! so reasoned and deliberated, and matured his determination ! It went like a dagger to her heart. Many a thought came hurrying to and fro, which she forcibly repelled, and yet which returned again.

A sort of instinctive feeling, that resolution was necessary, and submission a duty, gave her power to check for a moment the agitation that inwardly shook her. She withdrew her hands, and looked calmly upwards. Her lip was pale and quivering, but there was a burning spot on either cheek, that gave a wild unnatural brilliancy to her eye. She essayed to speak, but the effort was vain. She could as soon have uttered a sound in the agonies of suffocation, with the hand of a fiend grasping her throat. When she perceived it was so, she contented herself with bowing her head in token of obedience, and slowly rising, she turned towards the house. It was evident she could hardly distinguish her way, and De Lisle offered to guide her. But in this first moment of agony, kindness from him was a sort of mockery.

Passion is ever unjust, and who is at all times dispassionate? Lady Rosamond did not withdraw her hand; she snatched it away, with a motion indicating more scorn and contempt and loathing, than it seemed possible to express by one brief action.

It was Sir Hubert's turn to feel overwhelmed and blasted, and he remained rooted to the spot where his wife had rejected his aid, long after she had disappeared. He heard through the open window of her apartment, her door closed with some violence. He started and turned away, unwilling to listen for any other sound, but *one* did pursue him, smote on his ear, and impelled his steps more swiftly forward. It was a cry so feeble, so prolonged, so indescribably sad, it painted well the broken heart from whence it sprang. De Lisle sprang forward faster and faster, till he left the house far behind; but the sound rang in his ears, lived in his nerves, and seemed ever and anon renewed by memory in clearer, sharper tones than the first. Will this ever subside? thought he at last to himself; or have I plunged into greater misery, impatient of what, perhaps, was nothing strange—nothing more than thousands meet with and endure? No! this is mere weak-

ness. I knew I should suffer at first: but calm will come to us both. Poor Rosamond! I have steeped your gentle spirit in bitterness; but you will forgive me, and be happier without me! A feeling of desolateness succeeded these reflections. He flung himself on the earth, and wept as he had never wept before.

## CHAPTER XIX.

IT was night when Sir Hubert returned to the hall of his fathers, the home of his early days, once the abode of every domestic comfort. He lingered at the door, but none came forth to meet him; there was no light in the casement, the wind sighed among the long sweeping branches of the lofty cedars. All was blank and cheerless as his own heart. He shuddered, then smiled sadly at the associations so rapidly forming in his own mind, and stretched forth his hand to ring the door-bell. It had been carefully muffled, but the door was immediately unclosed by a footman placed beside it to watch his return; and before he had leisure to ask a single question, the medical man in attendance on the family glided with noiseless step from an adjoining room, and stood before him. Dr. Pritchard made a motion implying silence, and

led the way back into the apartment he had first left.

He then carefully shut the door, and related, that having called to see one of the children, he wished to give an account of it to Lady Rosamond, for which purpose he sought her in her morning-room, where he found her in a state of such unusual agitation, that he became alarmed for her health, and proceeded to feel her pulse. He was shocked to find so much fever, and judged it advisable to bleed her directly, which he had done. She was calmer, but so much debilitated, that he rather wished for farther advice.

“And why,” asked De Lisle eagerly, “did you not send for more?”

“You were expected home,” answered Dr. Pritchard, “and I could not well act without your sanction. Besides, I have no apprehension for the moment. I flatter myself all inflammatory symptoms will now be removed, but I need not remark to you, Sir Hubert, that her ladyship’s health is not what it has been; she has not recovered her premature confinement, nor the anxiety and fatigue of nursing her children. Her strength and spirits and colour have not returned as we could have wished.”

“Do you apprehend,” interrupted De Lisle, “any positive complaint?”

“If I did,” replied the Doctor, “I might meet it better than I am prepared to do at present. Her ladyship was certainly in a delicate, not to say precarious state, previous to this bleeding; and though it was necessary, it will weaken her, and add to the nervous symptoms I have remarked. In my own opinion, the chances are, that whatever may be given, will be as likely to do harm as good; and therefore, with your permission, I would gladly divide the responsibility with some abler person.”

There was a momentary silence. Sir Hubert broke it by proposing a consultation of physicians, to which the village doctor gladly assented. He was then requested to sleep in the house, in case of any return of fever through the night; to which also he agreed. De Lisle spent a night of sleepless misery. He persuaded himself his wife was dying, and that he had accelerated her end. A little patience, and he might have spared her the pangs of that day.

His remorse was much soothed in the morning, on being assured she had slept well and declared herself free from complaint of any kind. He went out because he was too restless to stay

at home ; but he returned early to get another report from Dr. Pritchard. It was still favourable, and, rather less oppressed, he sat down to dinner. Lady Rosamond was ordered to be kept very quiet, and he took advantage of the order to spend the evening at the Parsonage.

On his return he called Bridget, to inquire after her lady. This woman, though attached to her master, did not think his feelings of any moment in comparison with those of his wife. She replied therefore coldly and evasively, abruptly presenting him with a note from Lady Rosamond. It was soon read, containing only a request that he would suffer all arrangements to be stationary for a few days. It seemed to him as if she asked for a respite for permission to die in peace.

“Tell your lady,” he said hastily, “it shall be as she desires. I would tell her so myself, but fear to disturb her.”

He spoke with a faint hope that she would send for him, but she was too feeble to risk any emotion, and the few days she had asked for passed over without any farther message. When he heard she was able to sit up, and yet had not desired to see him, he fancied his absence altogether would be a relief to her, and he

desired Mrs. Solway, who daily called and had once been admitted, to mention his intention of visiting the Seymours.

He did so, and on his return was met by Mr. Solway. That gentleman stopped his carriage, and told him Jane and the children were expecting him to dinner. It was within a few minutes of their usual hour; and not to keep them waiting, he got out and walked the short way to the Parsonage. He was glad not to have a solitary meal, glad of any excuse for not entering his own house, and pleased to hear Lady Rosamond was much better. He had much to tell Jane of her sister, and the young Solways of their cousins; and the time passed off smoothly enough. But when the female part of the family had withdrawn, a gloom seemed to gather over the others. Sir Hubert's quick eye discovered a sign given by the Rector to his brother, who immediately arose and left them.

“Well!” said he impatiently, “what have you to say to me?”

“Little,” replied Mr. Solway; “but that little I lament most unfeignedly. I have seen Lady Rosamond since you left home, and was desired to inform you your wishes have been attended to, and that the Park is vacant.”

“ When did she go? Did she take *all* the children?”

“ She went only yesterday, and left Ellen in my wife’s charge. Her mother thought, if you did not leave the Park directly, you would prefer not being quite alone.”

“ And did you think Rosamond looking ill?”

“ How could she look otherwise?”

“ Nay, Solway, that reproach is unfair. Our separation cannot be more painful to her than it is to myself?”

“ Why, then, should it take place? Have you quite weighed all this? Are you sure you are doing your duty either by your wife or your children?”

“ Before I answer you, let me know what Rosamond’s statements have been?”

“ Her statements!” repeated Solway, with a look of surprise. “ Is she a person to make statements reflecting on her husband? God knows, we are all frail and sinful creatures; but if there be one who acts invariably on principle, I should say Lady Rosamond De Lisle is that one.”

Sir Hubert’s eye brightened, and he held out his hand in silence to his friend. After a mo-

ment he said, "Still she must have mentioned something—have given some reason for this determination?"

"She mentioned that it was your wish, but did not appear to be aware of your having any reason. I presume so from her expressing a hope you might re-consider a plan fraught with mischief to the children; and being in bad spirits, she naturally enough observed, she met a trial with the more courage, which, from her state of health, could not be of long endurance. This however was, as you may imagine, slightly glanced at, for she is not one who desires to make any call on the sympathy of her friends; and her principal anxiety seemed to be to spare you the gloom of a deserted house. She gave me this letter for you, and I leave you to read it. You will join our circle after, or go home, as may be most congenial to your feelings. I wished you to read her suggestions in this house that, thanks to you! is the abode of domestic felicity—in the home of Ellen Avondale's sister."

Mr. Solway laid the letter on the table before his guest, and, with a look that seemed to say "Take pity on yourself," arose and departed.

“OUR kind friend the Rector has promised to inform you of my convalescence and departure. I lost no time in obeying you, and have arranged the Park so that you may leave it at an hour’s notice, should that continue to be your intention. It would be vanity in me to suppose that any remark of mine can alter a resolution that appears of such long standing. Earlier, before you became wedded to the plan, I might have shown all its disadvantages, with some hope of being listened to. I have none now—and I make the attempt simply because I think I ought to do so. You have hoarded up many a secret thought and fancy, with which you judged me unworthy to be acquainted; you shall not add to these illusions, and persuade yourself that you are acting for my good, or for the welfare of my children.

“No, Hubert, do not deceive yourself; you are ruining my character, depriving yourself of the respect of your children, withering their young affections, staining the cheek of childhood with needless tears, as they witness the sadness of one parent and the hopeless misery of the other. When experience teaches you that you injure others, and gain for yourself

only liberty (*joyless* liberty, Hubert, with such a heart as your's), you will wish to retrace your steps and will find it impossible. The world will say you had compassion on your wife, not that she was innocent: and what an example then will my memory become to my poor infants, too young to know their mother's heart, or, it may be, judging of it as harshly as their father has done!

“ You say it will be a sacrifice, seeing so little of them; but who obliges you to banish any of us? Since *our* meeting is so painful, we need not meet. I am not so much addicted to seek those who wish to shun me. If I have done so hitherto, pardon me, and ascribe it to my ignorance. I did not understand all I now do. You have been accustomed to society—mixed society—which you cannot so well have if you part with me. Surely in public you might still bear to see me? I promise to interfere with nothing but as you order me, to see you only in the crowd, and to regulate my motions so as to make a casual rencounter impossible. Must I remind you that I have no parental home?—that *she* who would have protected me even when deserted by *you*, has no longer a name on earth?—that I have made

no friends but your's,—sought no society but such as you preferred?—in short, that I have not deserved this treatment—and that it is ungenerous to trample on one who has none to shield her?

“ ROSAMOND DE L.”

When first Sir Hubert glanced over his wife's letter, he was persuaded she had written under the influence of fever. He had accustomed himself to so different a view of the subject, that he could not comprehend her resenting so deeply as an injury, what he had persuaded himself she would rather feel as a relief. There seemed almost as much restraint in the plan she proposed, as either of them had suffered from before, and it was assigning to themselves an unnatural part, to be kept up only by continual attention, and a certain kind of hypocrisy.

His nature revolted from this sort of double dealing, and he was pained to see she thought only of the world, and how to present a smooth appearance in public. What the feelings of either might be when the eye of every chance observer was removed from them, she deemed it little worth inquiring. She simply stated the objections to their *seeming* to be disunited: their

being so in fact did not appear to form any part of her regrets. She complained not that he had ceased to love her, (though she spoke as if thoroughly convinced such was the case,) but that he should intend to weaken her consideration in public by withdrawing from her the protection of his presence. Perhaps she was right: but to think of nothing else! not to give one sigh to the past that had been so blest! one tear to the blank and desolate future!

He could not have believed her so dead to all that had once interested her—so coldly prudent, so attentive to the possible opinion of others, and so indifferent to his. He began to perceive, that in his impatience to get rid of irksome feelings, which by one effort of resolution he might have quelled in the onset, he had embarked on a stormy ocean that could not bring him to any haven of rest. “Of what,” thought he, “had I to complain? My wife cared not for me, and it might be she cared more for another. If the prospect was cheerless, why did I not turn away my eyes till it brightened? or, which is the same thing, till I became accustomed to it? We might imperceptibly have shrunk from habits of confidence and intimacy; we should have come to

a tacit agreement to seek other pursuits and separate occupations. All bitter speeches, and painful scenes, and illness, and letters such as this, would have been spared. Whatever Rosamond might have thought or felt, she is too high-minded and consistent to have done any thing reprehensible. We should at last have learned to consider each other as friends, equally interested in the welfare of our children; and never having quarrelled, there would have been no necessity for a reconciliation. Had Ellen been spared to us !”

His thoughts took another turn, and he soothed his bitter feelings by dwelling on the virtues of her who had ever brought peace to his heart. “Poor, miserable, versatile being that I am !” exclaimed he at last. “Have I struggled all my life to be master of all that surrounded me, and have I not yet learned to be master of myself? Was Ellen the rock of my strength, and in losing her have I fallen from one error into another? Is it true that, in my impatience, I am about to cast off one who never voluntarily injured me?—the child of her love—the mother of my children !” He rang the bell hastily, and sent for Mr. Solway. When that gentleman entered, he found his

guest leaning against the chimneypiece, supporting and concealing his face with one arm. He withdrew it immediately, and raising his head looked upon him.

Solway's eye sank beneath that troubled glance. "Is there aught," he asked, "in which I can serve you?" Those gentle accents, associated as they were with so many lessons of patience, forbearance, and benevolence, restored De Lisle to more composure.

"You are aware," he said quickly, "that it was my wish to part from my wife. I gave up the children, and I did not think she had any right to complain. We were unhappy, and I judged we should be less so asunder. I think so still—but it is not her opinion. I wished you to read her letter, and tell me candidly if she does not exaggerate the injury to her reputation, and to the well-doing of the children." He held out the letter, but Mr. Solway gently put it back.

"Pardon me," he said; "but unacquainted as I am with the circumstances that have produced your discord, wherefore should I listen to reproaches on either side? Had Lady Rosamond wished to open her heart to me, she would have done so when I saw her. What-

ever these expressions may be, bitter or plausible, haughty or submissive, they were meant for your eye alone. Ask me what question you will, to the best of my ability I am ready to answer it. In moments of much suffering, words are extracted as it were from the heart, which that moment only gave birth to, which do not live there, and must not be calmly judged of. Sir Hubert, you cannot doubt our regard for you both. It would grieve me sorely to diminish it one scruple for either of you."

There was a lofty composure in Solway's manner, an earnest benevolence in his countenance, that never failed to arrest the attention and tranquillize the feelings of whomsoever he addressed. The beneficial effect was not lost upon De Lisle, who, after a moment's reflection, said more calmly,

"Can you suppose any possible case in which it would be wise and judicious to break engagements made for mutual comfort, and which have ceased to impart it to either party?"

"Yes, many!" answered Solway; "though engagements are stubborn things, that cannot often be broken with honour, though they may with advantage. You best know the terms of

your own engagements, and how far you are at liberty to rescind them."

"Doubtless: but yet my opinion and yours may differ; and it is yours I wish to hear at present. When you married, did you think it would be justifiable under any circumstances to part with your wife?"

"I am happy to say," answered Solway with some sternness, "I anticipated such an event as little, doubtless, as you yourself did when you promised, in the face of Heaven and the world, that death alone should separate you from Lady Rosamond Trevannon. You may be released from that promise by her to whom you made it;—nay, I will not say that it would not be annulled (in the sight of man, at least) by impenitent guilt, because you owe it to your children not to give them such an example! But any other case, how strong soever in the eyes of worldly men, must appear insufficient to a minister of the Gospel, which enjoins not only justice but mercy—not merely gratitude for affection, but the pardon of injuries."

Sir Hubert's proud spirit arose strong within him at the rebuke of the preacher. "I was

wrong," he said, "to consult one who cannot guess my feelings. Yet, as a husband and a father—as a friend too—I looked for wholesome counsel!"

"But not," said Solway, "for just reproof: you have been ever a kind, munificent patron; and you have copied well the forms of affection and confidence; because the generosity of your temper, and delicacy of your feelings, taught you the only way in which benefits can be gracefully conferred. And is it only an outward form? and after so many years of kindly intercourse, in which we have felt each other's pains and pleasures, am I to learn that there is so little real friendship in your heart, that you swerve, like a startled horse, from the first lash inflicted upon you, and that, too, by no willing hand?"

"Forgive me, Solway: sorrow has soured my temper. It was not always thus. The more we value another, the less we wish that other to condemn us; and your censure was not gentle, for you cannot think that guilt of any sort could attach to *my* wife?"

Solway could have smiled at the emphasis he laid on the little pronoun; but this was not a moment to point out the inconsistent feelings

of his unhappy friend, and he replied therefore gravely,

“ It would ill become me to judge any one, however censured or calumniated, and Lady Rosamond hitherto has been neither. But, if you abandon her, she will be both ; even the high character which has been her pride and shield will now tell against her.”

“ Surely such absurd tales, which every one about Rosamond can disprove, would never be listened to, or could at any rate be put an end to by my being under the same roof with her whenever I went to see the children.”

“ Such visits would be awkward to yourself, and nearly useless to her. There are few persons sufficiently incurious never to think of their neighbours' concerns, or sufficiently benevolent to acquit them of blame whenever they go out of the beaten track. Lady Rosamond's situation in life, her beauty, her talents, her fortune, the singular propriety of her conduct and manners,—all contribute to make her a high aim for the shafts of slander. Do not flatter yourself that she can escape.”

“ Then,” said De Lisle, “ you see no alternative, and in justice to her I must adopt her plan ?”

“ I do not know what her plan is.”

Sir Hubert detailed it.

“It is a very bad one indeed,” said Solway unhesitatingly; “better than a separation, as reflecting less on your wife and not depriving either of you of the children; but not in the least a happier plan for either of you. I should be sorry to see you both cheerful and reconciled to it, because then I should know that all affection was extinct; and though well-tempered and well-principled people may live together very contentedly without much affection, yet it is a dreadful thing to lose where it was once so fully possessed and so highly valued.”

“We will not talk of that,” said De Lisle dejectedly. “It is long since that is past. As to a reconciliation, which I perceive you think the wisest course, it is equally out of the question. To quote from your own book, ‘The heart knoweth its own bitterness;’ and if that had not been greater than I thought myself bound to bear, I would not have sought a way out of it by proposing a separation. I imagined, too, it would be better for her as well as myself: it seems, I was mistaken. I will reconsider this, and may possibly hit on some middle course, that will suit all parties.”

It was in vain, however, that, restored to the

solitude of his own home, Sir Hubert reflected over his wife's letter and his own inclinations. The result of a sleepless night was a request to Mr. Solway that he would take his horse and ride over to the cottage. He was empowered to inform Lady Rosamond that her plan would be tried; but that Sir Hubert did not think it would answer, although he proposed making it as easy as possible by absenting himself frequently from his nominal residence. All this sounded harsh, and Solway regretted that it should be a mere verbal communication. He feared, however, to do harm by urging him to write. If he should express himself unkindly, his wife might read over his letter at a time when he felt differently, and confirm herself in the determination to avoid him, which, as matters now stood, appeared indispensable.

He set forth with a sad heart, made the most of the concession to her feelings, and spoke of earthly sorrows as experience and piety taught him to speak. Nor did he find an unwilling scholar. Lady Rosamond, while she wept over present sufferings, confessed that they were necessary to wean her affections from what had exclusively ingrossed them. The

first shock over, she bent her spirit to bear the trial, and with renovated strength she prepared to run her new race without faltering.

“I deserved punishment,” she said to Mr. Solway, “for giving up my heart so fully to the joys and the sorrows of a transitory state; but *his* was not the hand that should have inflicted it.”

“If,” replied he, “his hand has been made the instrument by Providence, do not think it has been barbarously or capriciously chosen. What other would have had the same effect? Your happiness has been evanescent; we will hope your afflictions will be so also. Your husband appears to me to labour under some strong delusion. Time, which is the friend of truth, will undeceive him. In the meanwhile, if you have a hard task assigned you, think of it but as a means offered you of atoning for the past, and proving your good resolutions for the future. It is most grievous to me to see you suffer: it would be more grievous still to think you were suffering in vain, and that you were to reap from it no advantage, either here or hereafter.

## CHAPTER XX.

PABLIAMENT had been longer in meeting this year than usual, and, even after it had met, few members were in town, little business was done, and there seemed no particular reason why De Lisle should go thither before it suited him. He proposed now taking part of his family with him, and suggested to Lady Rosamond she might visit Villars and his wife, who lived within twenty miles of the capital, and join him when they came to town, which was always late. To this arrangement she had nothing to object; and though she had never been from home without him since she married, as there could be nothing singular in her visiting her sister alone, she did not feel she had a right to make any remark. Lady Elizabeth received her with her usual affection and cheerfulness; and though Lady Rosamond could not help smothering a

sigh at the sight of her sister's domestic happiness, associated as it was with the recollection that her's was annihilated, she rejoiced in it too truly to suffer any selfish regrets to cloud her brow.

Meanwhile the little Ellen, who had accompanied her father to town, caught cold; and though she had had many colds before, at which he had felt no alarm, it seemed to him that she could never recover without her mother's care. He understood nothing of the management of children; it was the only department in which his wife had been paramount; and he grew daily more uneasy about Ellen. At last, having a notion that change of air was good for a cold, he determined to take the child down to her aunt's, and leave her in Lady Rosamond's charge. He offered Lady Julia, who had just come to town, to go down with him; and as she found every thing very dull, and was moreover always charmed to leave her husband, she entered into the plan with alacrity.

Arrived at her sister's, she was delighted to have a laugh against De Lisle, and ridiculed the idea of bringing a child out on a raw foggy day, by way of curing a cold in the head. Sir Hubert did not betray the displeasure he felt;

but, seriously anxious about his little girl, he thought the odious heartlessness of Lady Julia unpardonable, who, for her own amusement, had suffered him to do what might be injurious to Ellen's health. He was relieved when he found that his wife thought nothing of her indisposition, and longed to ask her himself if the journey had been prejudicial. This, however, he considered as a sort of infringement of their compact, and he refrained from it accordingly. The first time he saw her, or rather was in the room with her, was in Villars's library, where they were assembled waiting for dinner. There was no light but from the fire, and of that just sufficient to prevent falling over the chairs, but not enough to enable him to distinguish any thing.

When they adjourned to the dining-room, he gave his arm to Lady Elizabeth, to hand her to the head of the apartment, and looked down the long table to ascertain how far his wife had recovered her illness. He saw her, as he expected, standing beside Villars. She looked well, and was becomingly dressed: he saw, at one glance, that her beautiful fair hair was mixed with black roses; and that she wore a grey robe handsomely trimmed with bugles.

The Trevannons were all in slight mourning for a distant relation; and it was some time before De Lisle discovered that both his sisters-in-law had dresses exactly similar to the one he had admired on his wife.

There was one thing he did not understand in her appearance. She had a colour, faint, it is true, but still more than she had been able to boast of for some time: was she really better and happier?—or was she only feverish and agitated? He could hardly keep his eyes off her; and she, aware of the examination, grew more and more nervous every moment, not venturing to look at any one but through the long fringes of her half-closed eye. After dinner, she was glad of the excuse of sitting with little Ellen, who was restless and unable to sleep; and her husband did not again see her till the next morning, when he found her sitting at the breakfast-table, as pale as he had ever known her. Lady Julia, who came in after him, made an exclamation, and implored her to wear rouge if she did not wish to personate a ghost.

“I did wear it yesterday,” replied Lady Rosamond, “to please Elizabeth; but it falls off, and I run my fingers through it. Ellen asked me last night if I had been scratching my face,

and it really looked very like it. You cannot think how soon you will get used to my wan cheeks—sooner than I should to the trouble of painting them.”

“I do assure you, I shall never be in the least reconciled to any thing so ghastly; and, if you are obstinate, we must all join to make Sir Hubert *order* you to appear like other people. You, who are a pattern wife, ought to look well to please your husband, you know.”

“Are you quite sure,” said Lady Rosamond with a forced smile, “he would find out whether I wore rouge or not?”

This observation was so unlike any thing Lady Julia expected, that she felt nearly stunned by it. She looked up at her sister, and perceived for the first time, her expression of quiet but deep dejection. It seemed to her something altogether impossible that Rosamond should be positively unhappy, and unhappy through her husband! Lady Julia could taunt the prosperous,—she could not goad the miserable. Her eyes filled with tears as she said with a faltering voice,

“I beg your pardon, my dear sister! I forgot that you have been ill, and have not spirits for my rattle.”

Sympathy from Lady Julia was almost more than Lady Rosamond could bear: she, however, made an effort to smile, and to repress her tears, and succeeded in both. Not a single word passed between her and her husband; and when she came to town with her sister, she managed easily enough never to see him unless when he asked company to dinner. At other times, either he or she was absent from home. At first she felt awkward about dinner engagements: she sometimes declined them, sometimes sent word she was not ready, and begged him to send the carriage back for her; sometimes asked some one else to call for her. De Lisle was annoyed at the scrupulous manner in which she fulfilled her promise: he did not see that she imagined on that principally would depend their living under the same roof. He accused her of affectation in avoiding him, and often said to himself that, if she were but half as willing to infringe their rules as he was, they would hardly be so strictly adhered to.

He was quite persuaded that he was an object of abhorrence to her, and naturally enough concluded, if she had been indifferent to him before, she could not fail of shrinking from him now with fear as well as dislike. Her object ap-

peared to be to make him forget her existence, and he could hardly believe it possible that she was the same person who for so many years thought every thing wearisome that did not concern him.

They left town as thoroughly estranged from each other as when they came to it; and De Lisle, who had gone out more and received more company than he liked, sighed for the quiet and repose of the country. To live at the Park, however, on one side of the house, while his wife was at the other, would be a fret on his spirits, and, though it was not the shooting season, he went to a house which his father had built as a shooting-box. But this was not a dwelling such as he had been accustomed to. It was not furnished as a permanent residence; there were no books, none of his things about him. He tired of it most completely, and was delighted at the excuse of the Midsummer holidays, that would bring his elder boys home, to return to the Park.

As he drove up the stately avenue of trees, he felt so anxious to see all his family united, that he had half a mind to go to his wife's apartments and tell her that their mode of living was too great a restraint for him, and that if she

would not leave him, she must bear with his waywardness and put up with his fancies. It was the thought but of a moment. It would be too unreasonable! If they were unhappy together before, nothing had occurred to make them happier now. He had felt his isolation so keenly, had missed her so much, had been so uneasy about her health, that the long train of jealous feelings which had given rise to the separation had faded into distance and vagueness; and not unfrequently did he ask himself what sufficient reason he could have had for creating so much misery to himself. He attributed much of it, indeed, to the undecided plan he had adopted out of consideration to his wife; but when he remembered he was no happier quite alone, and that by his own arrangement he should have been almost entirely debarred the pleasure of seeing his children, he relapsed into doubt and indecision.

It was on his wife's birthday that he got to the Park, and he had forgotten it altogether till he was informed that was the reason the children were from home: they were gone to the parsonage by way of keeping it with the young Solways, who, though older than they, were extremely partial to them. Formerly Lady

Rosamond's birthday had been kept by having the children dine with her and their father, which, being a rare occurrence, was a great indulgence. Now she spent it alone: her children sent out in search of amusement; their father voluntarily absent. He felt the difference, and could not but confess that she must feel it too. He had half a mind to invite himself to the parsonage, where he knew he was always welcome; but he could not bear the appearance of going out to amuse himself when his wife had felt unequal to the exertion. His staying at home, indeed, in no way diminished her solitude; but he had a sort of satisfaction in immuring himself, since she had done so.

It had been a very fine day, and the evening continued bright. He strolled out into the plantation, and presently saw Eveleyn running across the small field that divided Mr. Solway's from the family mansion. Fearing that something had happened by so young a child being alone, he hailed him; and the boy, recognising his father, with apparent delight ran forward to meet him.

“Where were you going in such a hurry?” asked De Lisle.

“Home,” replied the child, when he could

recover breath enough to speak ; “ I left them all playing at blindman’s buff. I knew they would not miss me : so I was running home to Mamma, who is not well, and is by herself. Even Bridget is at Mr. Solway’s, and I shall be very glad to go back now you are come.”

“ Go then, my dear child, and I will come and fetch you all home soon, for it is getting late.”

Eveleyn scampered away, happy to get back to his play, and his father looked after him and said to himself, “ She has comfort, at least, in her children !”

After the first day or two, he found the awkward strangeness of his situation decrease. He knew he should see Lady Rosamond at church, if she were well enough to go out at all ; and he looked forward to Sunday, as if the day had power to make any change in their relative situation. It came ; and, shaded beneath the many folds of a thick black veil, his wife knelt beside him, and mingled her voice with his in the same thoughts and words. It passed away, and left no trace of the momentary union of heart and sentiment.

It was not surprising that he should get accustomed to this with more difficulty than Lady

Rosamond. She was suffering what had been inflicted on her. Her part was to bear her lot, not to struggle against it. He on his side was enduring a self-inflicted penance, without any illusion as to its being meritorious. He could not offer up the sacrifice of a broken spirit ; for he found, from experience, he was probably inflicting as much pain as he was enduring.

His spirits sank altogether : he had no courage to leave home, no apparent wish beyond the precincts of his own apartment and the pleasure of seeing his children. He was one day breaking in a pony for his eldest boy, when the animal, becoming unexpectedly restive, struck out its hinder feet with so much force as to break some of his ribs. He was conveyed home and bled. A sort of faintness hung over him, and he was not sure whether, among the many figures that flitted before his eyes, he had seen his wife or not. He asked no question ; but at night, when all was still, he had no difficulty in distinguishing the well-known step gliding through the adjoining apartment, and stopping as if to listen at his half-open door. He called her, and Lady Rosamond was instantly before him. He asked for some drink, and, intreating her to go to bed, begged she would

bring him some tea as soon as she was up in the morning. He wanted only an excuse to see her, and become once more an object of attention to her; but, afraid of committing himself, and ashamed of betraying what he thought a weakness, he spoke so coldly, that his wife could not be much gratified by his request. Accordingly, she summoned Mrs. Trevannon the next day to her assistance, by which means though she saw more of her husband than heretofore, she seldom addressed him directly, and never sat in his room without Gertrude or the children.

## CHAPTER XXI.

THE arrival of Lady De Lisle enlivened them a little. Her powers of conversation, her flow of animal spirits, even her love of managing here, where no one seemed to have energy enough for indispensable directions, were all advantages. Lady Rosamond, who in her halcyon days had thought her mother-in-law a fatiguing, interfering woman, was now glad to be directed by her, was amused by her sprightliness, and gratified by her eulogiums. Time was, thought she, when no praise but *his* sounded sweet in my ear. I am not so difficult now!" Lady Rosamond had asked none but her sisters to the Park, since she had ceased to consider herself as mistress; and her husband had forborne giving a single invitation, from mere lassitude of mind. Now the house was to be

made gay for his mother, and all her former acquaintances came in crowds to see her.

The Seymours, who had two grown-up girls to take about, were always upon the wing, and required very little pressing to come and meet all their family at the Park. Even old General Parry made the exertion of leaving his own fire-side, a thing he had not done for years. He was glad to find himself able to do so much more than was his custom ; not a little proud of seeing his grandchildren admired, nearly as much as he remembered their mother having been ; and being, besides, gay from temperament, and naturally fond of children, he joined in the games of the young De Lises, and laughed at their pranks till the tears ran down his cheeks. In short, every thing wore an air of hilarity ; and even Gertrude Trevannon smiled, when she followed with her eye the slight figure of her boy, foremost among his young cousins in all their active plays.

Sir Hubert's spirits rose nearly to the tone of those around him ; but Lady Rosamond's sank below their accustomed level. In the active discharge of her maternal duties and household occupations, her thoughts and her time alike well-regulated, she had acquired a calm, mono-

tonous kind of serenity, that looked to others, and even sometimes to herself, like content. But the sight of gaiety, real honest gaiety, taught her how far that was from her heart. She tried to sympathize with the joy of her friends, but the effort exhausted her. She listened with a vague smile to a recital intended to amuse; but long ere it was concluded, her overstrained mind had wandered from the subject. As she never betrayed the slightest irritation, the real state of her feelings was but half guessed at by any one.

Lady De Lisle thought her in bad health and moped. She tried to rouse her without perceiving that she was wearing her out. She set all the young people to act plays; and rummaged out of an old trunk, that had long had undisturbed possession of an empty garret, many a tinsel dress that had been formerly made for that purpose. The Miss Seymours were not much at home in reciting, but they danced very beautifully; and Lady De Lisle fixed on a ballet, in which they could display that accomplishment with advantage. Their cousin, Miss Parry, who was the third Grace, unluckily, in practising very earnestly in her own apartment, turned her ankle. She could

still walk very well, but dancing became out of the question. The disappointment was great, till Mrs. Seymour informed the young party that Lady Rosamond used to dance better than any of them, and, she was sure, would take Miss Parry's place, if they urged it very much.

The Miss Seymours had no great idea that any dancing could be tolerable not taught by *their* master, who was the fashionable one of the day. However, rather than break up the whole thing, they were thankful for any one who could *look* the thing, and Lady Rosamond's beauty and grace were but little diminished. When the proposal was made, however, it met with the most decided negative.

"You do not thing dancing wrong, dear Lady Rosamond?" asked Mrs. Solway's daughter, a timid girl of between twelve and thirteen.

"By no means, my dear. It is as good to dance across a room as to walk across it, and rather more wholesome."

"Then why won't *you* dance?"

"I never have danced since I married. I have forgotten how, and am too old to learn again. Besides, it is very well to be Columbine in one's teens, but there is a season for all things."

“Why, my dear Rosamond!” exclaimed General Parry, “you are not setting up for an old woman yet, I hope, with those bright curls and that smooth cheek! It seems to me but yesterday that I saw you dancing with that girl’s poor mother in my hall, to show Jane what a bolero was like. She was married then, so you should not let your matronly character stand in the way of pleasing the girls. Besides, I am sure Hubert would like to see you dance once more, to put him in mind of the days of his courtship.” And the old man chuckled and winked, quite unconscious that he had fallen on unlucky ground, appealing to De Lisle for a confirmation of all he had advanced.

There was a slight tinge of awkwardness in the manner in which Sir Hubert replied. The matter, too, was vague,—he did not think Rosamond strong—she was quite out of the habit of such exertions—she certainly used to dance very well—he should be sorry to see her act or indeed dance as a regular performance—but this was only filling up a gap, and if she felt disposed to take the trouble, he did not see why any one should object.”

“Why, who the devil, Sir, would think of objecting?” cried the old General rather testily.

“Come, Rosamond, my dear, don’t spoil such a pretty thing from sheer laziness.”

It is a hard matter to refuse childhood or age. In the former case, indeed, we gather courage from the fear of doing harm by continual compliance; but it is not so with the aged—their dispositions are fixed, their pleasures few, and they have little time left to enjoy those few. Had Sir Hubert given no opinion at all, or hinted one in consonance with her own feelings, Lady Rosamond, much as she wished to oblige her venerable guest, would have remained steady to her purpose. But there was something in her husband’s irresolute way of speaking, that left her, as it were, without defence against the solicitations of those around her.

Involuntarily, she looked at De Lisle, to gather some assistance, or some little idea, at least, of what he thought. Those mute appeals had once been frequent, but from the change in their situation had of course been utterly discontinued. It was but a look, and that an uncertain momentary one, yet how many feelings did it conjure up in the breast of Sir Hubert! In a tone of kindness bordering on affection, he replied to it—

“Nay, my dear Rosamond, you know best what you are equal to. If you do not think it will fatigue you, there can be no reason for refusing.”

There was a universal exclamation of glee at this sort of decision. The young people thanked him, and, surrounding Lady Rosamond, seemed disposed by dint of clamour to bear down the most inveterate resolution. Of all the things that by possibility she could have been asked to do, there was certainly nothing she could have disliked more. She felt worried almost to exasperation; but she was so little in the habit of opposing mere selfish arguments to any proposal from which others were likely to derive amusement, that she remained passive and powerless.

A moment's reflection, and she remembered she would lose all the merit of a sacrifice by performing it ungraciously. She made therefore a kind speech to General Parry, and tried to look cheerful; but the idea of what she had undertaken in her state of health and spirits made her so nervous, she left the room to try and recover herself alone. As she passed Lady James Saville, that lady detected the tears in her eyes, and felt indignant at the thoughtless

selfishness that had persecuted her into doing what was so annoying to her.

“ I thank God,” she said with some emotion to De Lisle, “ my daughters had in their youth as high spirits as any girls one could see, but they never sought amusement at the expense of another.”

“ And let me tell you, my dear Lady James, that is no small thing to be thankful for. Young people are not very apt to feel for others till they have suffered themselves. They do not comprehend that weariness of existence which makes every thing distasteful, and every exertion a labour. Rosamond’s health appears to be restored ; and though this fancy may fret her spirits at first, she will probably be the better for the excitement afterwards.”

“ There are some excitements, no doubt, for which we are all the better, but I fear this is an unnatural stimulus, and consequently not a beneficial one. However, time will show !”

The important day of exhibition at last arrived, and much bustle and confusion did it appear to create. Miss Saville seemed as much occupied as any,—playing for those who wished to practise steps, and working for every one. From the moment it had been decided that

Lady Rosamond was to be one of the figurantes, Anne had been indefatigable in fancying and arranging a dress that would become her. That indeed was not very difficult, but she had latterly adopted a style of attire, as being the least troublesome, that did not show her off to advantage; and Miss Saville determined to take this opportunity of convincing her that she was neither so old nor so faded as she fancied.

It is certain, that when she made her *entrée* between her two young and joyous companions, neither their youth nor their freshness could stand in competition with her more elegant loveliness. Even their figures, which were generally so much admired, looked coarse and nearly awkward, beside her perfect grace and symmetry. She danced indeed less than her companions, but her simplest attitude was worth all their elaborate dancing; and once, when she could not help coming forward alone, it was evident she was no novice in the accomplishment, though it had been so long abandoned. Every one looked on the fairy performance with as breathless attention as if dancing could be listened to as well as seen; and old General Parry's loud "bravo!" was the first sound that broke the deep silence.

De Lisle, too, had gazed and admired with the others; but the loud plaudits that roused him from his trance, were discord to his ear, and wormwood to his spirit. With an almost visible shrinking, he forced himself to look from the stage; and his eye fell by chance on a young man of the name of Salisbury, who sat near him. This youth was the younger son of a noble house, sent to the dwelling of a distant relation in the county, a mere country squire, to be out of the way until some story of extravagance or profligacy (it was not exactly known which) should have time to blow over. This was the more necessary, as he was to be provided for by means of a living in the family. Sir Hubert, who had met him often hunting during the preceding winter, could do no less than ask him sometimes to his house. He did it, however, sparingly; and would not have done so on this occasion, had not Lady De Lisle, who knew his mother, wished to be civil to him for her sake.

Now, as by chance he looked at him, he saw at once enough to make him repent having done so. The whole soul of the youth was evidently on the stage, and that not on the performance in general, but solely ingrossed by Lady Rosa-

mond herself. There he sat, motionless, with a deep flush over the whole of his face that could be seen; for it was bent forward, and withal shaded by rich clusters of dark hair. He lifted not a hand to applaud, he opened not his lips to utter a sound of praise; and he replied to those around him, who asked if any thing could be more beautiful, by one of those dark and fiery glances which betray the impatience of a stormy spirit.

But none had leisure to think of him, or to note his looks—none, save De Lisle, who gazed on, as if fascinated, to watch all that was painful to be known. Whenever Lady Rosamond disappeared, Salisbury's head sank almost on his breast, and he awaited with closed eyes till the change in the music announced the possibility of her return. A very pretty group, chiefly children, in peasants' dresses, had been executing a sort of village dance. It opened, and discovered the three principal performers in the back-ground.

They advanced fancifully entwined together by long wreaths of flowers, which they held over their heads. The measure changed to a sprightly one, and they came forward rapidly. Something bright fell at their feet. It was

thought to be a part of their silvery attire, but as they retreated in the same attitude and step with which they had advanced, Lady Rosamond moved the shining substance with her foot, and at the first moment of repose lifted it from the ground, and seemed to fix it within her girdle. What could it be, thought her husband, that she was so careful of? He was quite aware the ornament had not been worn visibly, and it seemed singular to conceal a thing set in brilliants, and intended therefore as a conspicuous part of dress.

He remembered, unluckily, that Lady Avondale's jewels had been for the most part divided between her sisters, but he perfectly recollected her son giving some smaller trinkets to Lady Rosamond. Was it, then, one of these? And did his wife wear any of them thus secretly, and no doubt constantly, flattering herself it was for the sake of her adopted mother, while, in truth, they were precious as the gifts of Eveleyn? He had slumbered of late over his jealous feelings, and almost doubted at times that he had ever had very solid grounds for them. They were stung into madness by this trifling circumstance.

“ I have done wrong hitherto,”—thus he revolved the torrent of wretched fancies in his mind—“ I have done wrong in smothering what I was not bound to conceal. I will know at once the truth, the whole truth in this case. What if it be his, and worn in memory of him, I am but where I was. My situation cannot now change, and there will be comfort in proof. There is repose in certainty, of whatever sort.”

With these thoughts, he scarcely waited for the curtain to drop that announced the close of the performance, ere he arose and made his way hastily to the door. Arrived there, he found such a rush of people, all eager to get out and congratulate and compliment the performers, that he was constrained to stop for a moment. In the buzz of voices and exclamations, he distinguished the more elevated tone in which young Saville said to his mother, “ If there be any thing perfect on earth, it is Lady Rosamond’s dancing !”

“ There is one thing on earth more perfect,” calmly replied Lady James, “ and that is Lady Rosamond’s temper.”

The words sounded like a reproach in Sir Hubert’s ears, for was he not going to try that tem-

per? "I will be very gentle," said he to himself: "right or wrong, I will still be gentle. She has never voluntarily given me pain. I will not task her wearied spirits. I will but ask to see that pledge, and keep silence though it wring my heart." He pushed on, but she was nowhere to be found.

"She will be gone to change her dress," said one of the Miss Seymours; "but pray, dear Sir Hubert, do not suffer it! She looks so beautiful as she is!"

The words rang in De Lisle's ears, but conveyed no positive notion of their import. He passed on, and was soon at his wife's door. It was locked, and Bridget, half unclosing it, said in a surly tone,

"My lady's tired, and can see no one." She was on the point of closing it in his face, when she recognised her master; and partly in surprise, partly in doubt, continued to hold it in her hand, though without making way for him.

He put her gently aside, and entered a room he had not visited for so long a time, and never thought to see again. A keen blast from the open window made him shudder. Full in

its influence, and stretched on the floor, her head reclining on Miss Saville's lap, lay Lady Rosamond, her light blue and silver drapery thrown over her head, to protect her from the cold, her long fair tresses escaped from the diamond wreath that confined them, hanging in confusion over her neck and shoulders, and even sweeping the ground.

“ Good Heavens ! my dear Anne,” exclaimed Sir Hubert, “ what are you thinking of, to let in all this cold wind upon her !”

“ My Lady called out for air, and flung herself down where you see,” muttered Bridget.

“ Well, well ! shut the window now, and give me some salts ;” and as he spoke, he raised her from the ground, and laid her gently on the sofa. Miss Saville produced the salts in silence, and presently after made a sign to Bridget to follow her, and softly glided away. Lady Rosamond neither moved nor opened her eyes, and her cheek had long been somewhat of the hue of alabaster ; but the excessive ghastliness of her countenance yielded at last to a more natural colour. That deathlike form contrasted painfully with her shining and fantastic attire : it was the comment of mortality on the

follies of life. But these follies, De Lisle well knew, came not near the heart of his wife. They were worn as loosely as her gaudy trappings, and were even more easily thrown off. As he continued to gaze upon her, he detected a tremulous motion of her under-lip, and presently a few heavy drops escaped from beneath her long lashes, and trickled slowly over her pale cheeks.

Had she wept under the pressure of strong affliction, he could have borne it; but tears of mere weariness and exhaustion betokened such a previous state of weakness and dejection, and one altogether so unlike what he had formerly known, that he could not behold them calmly. He bent over her, and uttered some soothing words; but she did not notice them in any way. He called her by her name, he even touched with his lips her closed eyelids, and kissed off the tears that hung on their dark fringes; still she betrayed, neither by sound nor motion, that she was conscious of his presence. After a few moments, however, it became evident that she had been aware of the fact; for in so low a murmur that it required to be as near as he was to her to distinguish her words, she said,

“ We should not both be absent; go down

and amuse the people, and prevent their coming to me.”

“ Miss Saville will take care of that ; and I should not have come but to ask you a question, which will do as well to-morrow : therefore good night now, Rosamond. Shall I ring for Bridget ? ”

“ Not yet, ” she said feebly, but in a more distinct tone, and opening her eyes, though with a kind of effort, as if they had already looked on much more than she cared to behold, — “ not yet ; I must hear your question first. It must have been something urgent that could have brought you here. ”

“ No indeed, it will keep very well, and you need repose. ”

“ Ay, ” she exclaimed, suddenly raising herself on her pillows, “ and shall need it equally to-morrow and next day—and every day, to the one, only one, that brings repose to all. You see I can answer you, say therefore all that I am to hear. ”

De Lisle saw, by the earnestness with which she spoke, that it was indeed unnecessary to put off making his inquiries. At the first mention of the ornament he had seen her drop and recover, her pale cheeks glowed with so

bright a colour, that all his surmises seemed justified. She answered too in a hesitating evasive manner, that it was a locket she had long had, and which was of no consequence.

He pressed to see it, and she met the request only by an expression of wonder that he should attach so much consequence to a bauble; or, indeed, to any thing *now*, which it might suit her to wear. More and more confirmed in his suspicions, he became only the more urgent for the proof that they were not lightly adopted. Seeing at last that he was determined, she changed her tone, and with a sort of cold gravity, not unmixed with displeasure, said slowly—

“It is your will, and I am not accustomed to dispute that; but, in justice to myself, I should state, before I produce it, that I have worn it *solely* from habit, and attach to it no other value than that which memory may reflect upon it!” As she uttered these words, every one of which fed the jealous fears of her husband, she drew the locket from her bosom, and flung it almost disdainfully on the table before him.

He grasped the jewel as if he would have crushed it in his hand; and so many lights flashed before his eyes, he did not for a

moment recognize it. When he did so, such was the revulsion of his feelings, that he could have cast himself at Lady Rosamond's feet, and sued for pardon in the most abject terms; for the locket had been his gift on the day of their marriage, and contained the date of that event, and a lock of his hair. He hid his face for a moment, and then held out the ornament to his wife. She declined receiving it by a motion of her hand, and said presently, in a broken voice—

“You have chosen to see it—you are at liberty to retain it!”

He looked at her: her whole frame seemed quivering with emotion; and her cheek and brow were flushed, as of one who is struggling with an uneasy dream. He went up to the sofa—he hesitated for a moment; then sitting down beside her, he said tenderly—

“My Rosamond! let us for once understand each other. I did not deserve that you should wear that locket; but you have done so. I am not become less worthy than I was three hours ago; to spurn it now would be caprice. I do believe it has lost all value beyond the recollection it brings of better days; but for their sake, my love, do not reject it. I adjure

you by our lost happiness!" His voice sank, his hand trembled, and he seemed unable to restore the jewel.

Lady Rosamond took it from him: she pressed it to her lips and her heart, but she was silent. He was grieved to think he had taken such a moment of weakness in which to agitate her; and with a hurried farewell, he rose abruptly, and went to the door.

He turned round and looked at her. Had she not met that look, he would instantly have departed; but her eyes were full upon him, and she did meet it, and feel much that it expressed. She sprang from the couch, and was in her husband's arms in a moment.

"And do you pardon me, Rosamond!"

"And do you really love me still!"—were the only words they uttered—nor did either appear to want an *answer* to their respective questions.

Presently they heard a gentle tap at the door, against which they were leaning. De Lisle opened it upon the anxious face of his mother. She did not at first perceive Lady Rosamond, and, in whispering accents, asked if she should disturb her, and if any thing ailed her but

fatigue? Sir Hubert replied that he hoped not: and his wife, raising her head from his shoulder, thanked her mother-in-law with all the little voice she had left, and confessed her inability to speak and almost to stand. Lady De Lisle insisted on her going to bed, and gave her the choice of a basin of soup or a dish of tea, assuring her that one or the other she must take. Lady Rosamond was not able to combat advice of any sort, and, accepting the tea, she said to her husband—

“ I think you *must* go down.”

“ I fear so,” he replied, “ for I hear the supper going in: you will be all the quieter, for it will take us from your side of the house. I leave you in my mother’s hands; she is a capital nurse, and will not let a sound approach you.”

He placed her in an arm-chair by the fire, set a cushion for her feet, threw a shawl over her shoulders, and recommending her to send for Bridget, to gather up her Ophelia tresses, and his mother not to suffer her to speak, left the room with a lighter heart, if not with so quick a step as he had entered it. Lady De Lisle, who had secretly lamented the cold terms

on which her son and his wife seemed to be, was a little puzzled at all this: but she was a woman of the world, who knew how to look at things as if she saw them not; and neither by word nor manner did she betray to her fair patient either curiosity or wonder.

## CHAPTER XXII.

THE mind of man is at times little better than a chaos; and there are moments when the past, the present, and the future, overwhelm it at once, and seem to displace every object, and destroy as it were the whole *keeping* of the picture. This had been so much De Lisle's case, and such a torrent of thought and feeling had swept over him in the short space of half an hour, that all which had preceded it of minor importance, was thrown to such a distance as to be well nigh annihilated. When he joined the company and found them still for the most part in their fanciful attire, he wondered at being thus brought back to that which had been so much forgotten, and yet was so recent.

He listened for a few moments to observations on the performance that had but just closed, to convince himself it was not a dream; and then

making an effort to fall into the current, joined, as he was expected to do, in applause to all who did and did not deserve it. He had given his attention so sparingly to the whole exhibition, that he might have been puzzled for proper terms, had he been alone : but he was in a crowd, and he had but to echo the words of others, and the praises of those who had, perhaps, been more pleased than he had been, and who, at any rate, were more addicted to eulogy than he was. Still he did not quite shake off the confusion of his ideas till his mother joined them.

She was a sort of link between his feelings and those of his guests ; and he began then to feel some confidence in the reality of all that surrounded him, and a somewhat clearer perception of his own identity. After the ladies had withdrawn, the wine circulated more briskly than usual. A host who has not much to say, can always push about the bottle ; and Sir Hubert did so from mere absence, till so much had been drunk that most of the party felt disposed to drink more. The morning dawned on these unusual revels, and discovered some asleep ; others, less fortunate, only stupified ; while the

more riotous ones had just sense enough left to stagger off to their beds.

De Lisle unbarred the house-door, and stood in the porch to cool his fevered lips with the fresh and rather sharp air. He was not as young as he had been, and his aching head and wearied spirit reminded him of the fact; for he had not drunk much, though he had remained at table so long. He knew those throbbing temples had little chance of repose on his pillow, and he determined to dress himself afresh and walk out. He found his farming people up and at work, and he loitered with them till cold and exercise had braced his nerves afresh.

It was getting late and he returned home, expecting to meet some of his female guests, at least, assembled round the breakfast-table. On the steps of the porch, he found Miss Saville, with her little nephew on her knee, listening, it would appear, very attentively to some story she was telling him.

“Who spoils you, young urchin?” said his uncle, patting his head; and the boy, laughing and springing up, half pleased and half ashamed, answered, “Aunt Anne!”

“Is no one down yet?” asked Sir Hubert.

“I have seen no one but Mr. Salisbury,” she replied; “and he rather looked as if he had never been in bed. He darted past me in that dark walk a minute ago, as if he had been afraid of my pursuing him and making a forcible seizure.”

“Perhaps he saw a bailiff in his mind’s eye!” said De Lisle, laughing: “I have heard he has sometimes had to exert some ingenuity in evading them.”

“Altogether, he is not the sort of young man I should have expected to find domesticated here.”

“And why so? Do you mean because he is in love with my wife?”

“I certainly did not mean that,” she said, somewhat surprised at his abruptness, “but even that circumstance is not in his favour.”

“What it may ultimately be, I know not; at present it is rather his misfortune than his fault. Rosamond has some youth yet to boast of, and no inconsiderable portion of beauty. It is known that we once lived happily together, and that we do so no longer. In the eyes of such men as Salisbury, a lovely woman who is neglected by her husband, is almost fair game. Her manners, indeed, are not only correct, but

cold, and doubtless chill many of her admirers ; but the fancies of ordinary characters are passions with such as Salisbury, and, in spite of appearances, he has the French assertion to encourage him ; “ *Elle a aimée, DONC elle aimera.*”

Miss Saville, perplexed and shocked, fixed her eyes on Sir Hubert. She answered with unusual gravity, “ Do you know that such a manner of speaking of Lady Rosamond sounds like blasphemy in my ears ?”

“ You mistake me, my dear Miss Saville ; I am not speaking of her, but of Salisbury. Looking only to the chances of success, knowing nothing of her disposition, without faith in her principles, in principle of any sort perhaps, or, at any rate, feeling that passion is stronger, and in the end therefore will triumph, I cannot wonder at his conduct. Under other circumstances, he would probably not have given up all self-government so completely ; and I am more fully aware than it is quite pleasant to be, that if Rosamond’s lover be deserving of censure, he does not merit it so much as her husband.”

“ I allow that it is less marvellous to love her than to neglect her ; but though a man may slumber at the mouth of a cave that contains

“ Will you be that fairy, Anne? for it seems clear from your statement that we cannot go on without an active intermediate friend.”

“ Who might,” interrupted Miss Saville, “ do more harm than good. No, my dear Sir Hubert, we do not meet a Lady Avondale every day, and I have at least the sense to know what is above my capacity. I am not apt to give myself airs of youth, but I am too young for such an office. I should have no weight with either of you, and the world would lend me other views, and Rosamond herself would be jealous.”

“ Rosamond jealous! how little you know her!”

“ Better than you in that respect, for I have seen her jealous of little Ellen; and it is not so many nights ago that she spoiled her work, and cut it in every direction but the right one, while you were playfully struggling with Louisa Seymour for the counter she had seized unfairly at cards.”

“ She was thinking of something else, depend upon it. I have particular reasons for knowing it is not her nature to be jealous.”

“ Particular nonsense! The proof! the proof!”

“ I will give you a proof ;” and he stated the circumstance of the anonymous letter.

Miss Saville smiled. “ When I said she was jealous, I did not mean that she had lost her senses under the influence of the malady. Would *you* have been roused by an anonymous letter, the most cowardly, and usually the most groundless attack on the feelings of another that can be made? If you had given her no cause for jealousy, was it to blaze out on so flimsy a pretext ?”

“ She might have named it to me, at least.”

“ By which, I am to understand, that when *you* have been annoyed, or jealous, you have always named it to her, and had every thing set straight at once. Is it so ?”

“ Why, not exactly.”

“ Oh ! the virtues of the fairy glass ! I would one could buy you one, or that you would seek some substitute for it ! There’s the breakfast bell at last, which is a joyful sound, for I am famished.”

So saying, Miss Saville held out her hand to Sir Hubert, to be assisted in rising from her very low seat. He lifted her up by it, and kissed it ere he relinquished it. He had known her almost from childhood ; he had known her mo-

ther before she was born : her sister had become sister to his wife ; in every point of view, setting aside even the extreme difference in their ages, so simple and natural an act of gallantry had nothing surprising in it.

But chance did not stand her friend. The breakfast-room had a bay-window, which commanded a view of that *very* spot, and in it were assembled a group of persons impatient for their breakfast, wondering what Sir Hubert could have to say so very particular to Miss Saville, that he should sit out so long on the stone-steps. The young girls, for the most part, chattered and tittered, without any malicious intention ; but there was a sour, elderly matron among them, a Mrs. Henderson, the established gossip of the village, who could raise a story any day on yet more slender grounds. She had never been at the Park before, and probably would not have been asked now, had she not had a pretty niece who was musical.

There are various petty tricks and stratagems by which insignificant persons endeavour to be important. Mrs. Henderson thought it was her cue to be very indignant with the De Lisles for their excessive impertinence to her-

self and *all* the neighbourhood, though she could not get many persons to feel ill-used and join in her animadversions. Although she seized with avidity the first invitation offered, she made amends for the condescension by finding as much fault with the family when in their house, as she had formerly done by her own fire-side.

The present opportunity seemed glorious, and she was not the person to miss it. She shook her head, looked wise and solemn, wondered at the blindness of some people, and the way in which they selected their friends; could not indeed find so much fault with Sir Hubert, who was a profligate from his youth: what's bred in the bone, &c.—to be sure, when wives would look so stiff and haughty, and younger women would lay themselves out to be agreeable, why it would be odd to see it turn out otherwise.

It may be supposed, that Mrs. Henderson knew when to time her observations, and at such a moment as the present, it was no small satisfaction to have no one present who could check her. She had young and thoughtless auditors, who, aware she was spiteful, had some amusement in stimulating her to fresh hints and

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sarcasms. As to the fact, whether Sir Hubert flirted with Anne Saville or not, that was of no consequence; they thought it, whether true or false, a most capital joke.

Sir Hubert was in their eyes a steady, respectable gentleman, and Miss Saville a very obliging old maid. They could see only a ludicrous image: it was *so* droll that they could not investigate if it were also wrong. Besides, Miss Saville had been useful to them, and had never interfered with them—they had neither rivalry nor rebuke to fear from her. Accordingly, though not one repelled the slander with honest indignation, not one attached to it the slightest importance; and Mrs. Henderson found the pleasure of being listened to, counterbalanced by the certainty of not being believed. Still, the consciousness that they had been canvassing the parties, unfavourably lent to the manners of the juvenile group a certain awkward stiffness in greeting their host and his companion, unseen by the former, but perceived and understood by the latter.

Women are quicker sighted in such matters, because they attach more importance to feminine gossip, and know what causeless animosities it has the power of producing. The slan-

der of a man, however bitter, is less mischievous, because it recoils on the speaker. It is such an unmanly vice, that we readily believe the person capable of it is also capable of inventing the tale he relates. But women who spend their lives over small matters and petty details, are allowed a certain latitude in trifling anecdotes ; and few are aware how easily temper, prejudice, or a mere habit of exaggeration, will lend to those narrations the true character of scandal.

Anne perceived at a glance that she had figured as heroine to the last tale of gossip, and comprehending by the manner in which the party was arranged in the window, that they could see her, though she had been turning her back to them, she had no difficulty in guessing that Sir Hubert had come in for his share of censure. She could have found in her heart to have pitied Mrs. Henderson, for having found so meagre a subject ; and, in the meantime, she sat down to make breakfast, with an expression on her countenance of so much amusement and humour, that Henry Solway could not refrain from asking her what she was thinking of ?

“ That you have not been my champion,”

she said in a low tone, and a look of some archness.

“Would you have thanked me for defending you against such foes and such insinuations?”

“Assuredly; and so would Mrs. Henderson. Only think of the fresh materials you would have furnished her with; she would have made out that I had also infatuated *you*, which would be a considerable improvement to the present simple story.”

“That would never do for one of Mrs. Henderson’s stories, for it might stand some chance of being true.”

Miss Saville was so very busy pouring out the tea, that she not only made no reply, but did not even betray any consciousness of having heard the civil speech addressed to her; and Henry Solway, to hide the awkwardness of not being attended to, took up a newspaper. He was not much of a politician; and after having looked for army and navy promotions, he turned to deaths and marriages, with the same idea of discovering an acquaintance. Almost immediately he said to Lady James Saville, who had just taken her seat opposite to him,

“When I am very desirous to be married, I

will get you to wish it. It was only yesterday you said how glad you would be to hear of Lord Avondale's marriage, and behold 'tis done!"

"You don't say so! And to whom?" exclaimed many of the party.

"To a Miss Conistone, who has or has not a large fortune. It's so long a paragraph, I have but glanced over it."

"Pray, give it all," cried Mrs. Seymour; "I am so charmed to think Rosamond's sulky pet should have done so gay a thing."

"Lately, at Florence," read Mr. H. Solway, "Honorina, youngest daughter of the late Ralph Conistone, banker, to Eveleyn, eighth Baron Avondale. This marriage has produced much conversation among the English resident here, both because the young lady is still in deep mourning for her father, and also that she has probably by her marriage forfeited her claim to property of a considerable amount. The late Leonard Conistone, uncle to Ralph Conistone, deceased, left his fortune to his nephew and his son; failing them, to his eldest niece, on condition that her husband took the name of Conistone; declining which, it would pass on to his youngest niece, on the same conditions. If neither of those ladies married, they were to enjoy

only a life interest in the property ; and if their husbands declined complying with the wish of the testator, it was to go to any one who could prove himself in any way related to the Conistones, of course, on adopting their name. It appears that Leonard, the son of Ralph, died in his infancy ; Sarah, eldest daughter to Ralph, married many years ago the Honourable Augustus Melthorpe, who preferred embarking in some speculation in America, to sinking his ancient name. They have kept up no communication with the family on either side ; but should no other relation appear to claim the Conistone property, it is supposed one of their sons will be induced to adopt the name, and put in his claim as next of kin."

" Why, what an old goose-cap this testator must have been," exclaimed Seymour, " to make such a confounded puzzle about a name no one ever heard of before ; and money he could not care for, when he was out of the way of spending it or saving it."

" I conclude," said Lady James, " the banker had money independent of his uncle's property, so that Miss Conistone will not be a very bad match for Lord Avondale ; and at any rate, he

is affluent. I wonder if they met abroad for the first time?"

"Certainly not," said Miss Saville, "for it is a very old attachment; so old, indeed, that I had forgotten all about it. Mr. Conistone would not hear of both his daughters giving up so fine a property, and Honoria accordingly has remained single till his death. Lord Avondale is bound to make a paragon of a husband, or his wife, one of these days, may lament the sacrifice of so noble a fortune."

"Well," exclaimed Mrs. Seymour, "to think of that solemn Peer turning out a sentimental Corydon, the very prince of constant lovers and faithful shepherds! How long have you been his established *confidante*, Miss Saville?"

"That is an honour to come," replied Anne, smiling. "It is many years since I was told all I tell you, by his brother; and I am sure it is so long since I have bestowed a thought upon it, that I wonder to find it in my head, now that the name of Honoria Conistone, and the account of her great-uncle's tiresome will, awake my dormant memory."

There was more said on the subject by all

present, and indeed all but De Lisle had some comment to make on the gentleman, or the lady, or the will, or marriage in general, (which furnishes young ladies and gentlemen with so many trite remarks,) or speculations on young Melthorpe's chance of coming in for this fortune that had been rejected by two sisters. Sir Hubert not only said nothing himself, he did not even hear what others said. He sat motionless and abstracted, with a quick, heavy throbbing at his heart, and a cold dew on his forehead. All this he might have known before had he but asked. The conviction of his own injustice, and the harsh conduct he had been induced to pursue towards his mild and placable wife, was felt with that degree of poignancy, which only persons of the same delicate organization can fully understand.

Now that every pretext for suspicion was removed, he saw how much he must have been under the dominion of fancy; he perceived that all his unhappiness (and he had suffered much) proceeded from that blot in his character which neither time nor experience had enabled him to efface. Of his own pangs, to do him justice, he did not at that moment think; but how deeply had he wounded Rosamond!

What hours of solitary misery he had inflicted upon her ! She would forgive him, he did not doubt it ; for she was generous, and she loved him. But could he ever bring back peace to the bosom he had tortured, the rose of health to that white cheek, or the light of gladness to eyes dull with weeping !

And she *did* forgive him, and she was again happy ; as those who have suffered long and deeply are happy, with fear and trembling. She was never again in danger of forgetting that all human dependence is unsafe, all earthly joy unsound. Her health was destroyed, her spirits gone, the illusions of her youth had fled. Yet she rallied for a time, for she loved her husband ; and whatever were his defects, it was still most sweet to feel that he had never ceased to love her. She renewed, too, with cordial satisfaction her former intimacy with the wife of Avondale. It was gratifying to discover that her friend had not forgotten her, and had given up all intercourse with her solely at the peremptory mandate of her father, who considered it but as an excuse for hearing of her lover.

The mist of prejudice had fallen from Sir Hubert's eyes, and he now saw Lord Avondale

as he was, and frankly made the first advances towards a more friendly intercourse. He, on his side, was no longer the gloomy, silent Peer, who had been censured as proud, while he was only unhappy.

Lady Rosamond rejoiced most truly in this change of affairs. She looked on the brightening scene from which clouds were rolling fast away in every direction; she hailed it with a smile of gratitude and peace. She could no more: the last sands of her appointed time had nearly run out; she counted them one by one, and would gladly have had a few more to number. It would not be—and she met the last trial as she had encountered preceding ones, with pious fortitude and an uncomplaining spirit.

And De Lisle? the bereaved and desolate one—how bore he a loss which he felt he had deserved, and feared he had accelerated? None knew;—time had already furrowed his brow, and scattered a silvery hue over his raven locks. It might be, that the ravages of care were more rapid still; but he complained not. The descent into the vale of infirmity and years was smoothed by many a loving, filial hand, and he was grateful for ten-

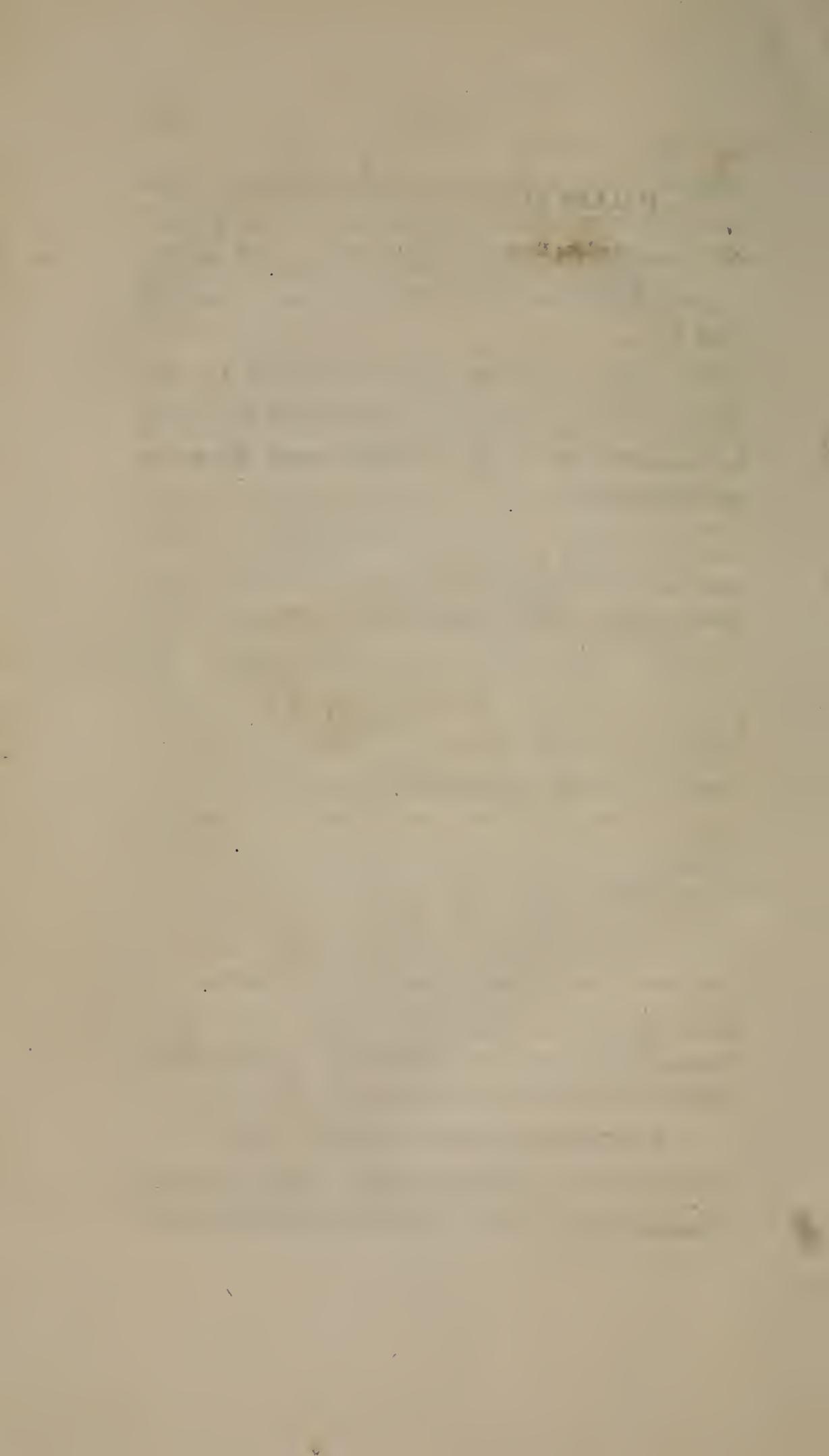
derness he so well deserved from them. Still, he was companionless and alone, for how should the young sympathize with the aged? or the dearest friend minister consolation to *untold* grief?

The last articulate sound uttered by Sir Hubert De Lisle was the name of his wife—the last admonition to his children was, BEWARE OF DISTRUST!

THE END.

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